Simply This Moment!

A COLLECTION OF TALKS ON BUDDHIST PRACTICE

BY

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The Buddha says in the Laṭukikopama Sutta, that happiness which is apart from sensuality and pleasure, apart from unwholesome *dhammas*, should be pursued, that it should be developed, that it should be cultivate, that it should not be feared. (see MN 66.20 & 21)

I want to take the opportunity this evening to talk to you about the process of meditation leading up to *jhānas*. Now, just over a fortnight into the Rains Retreat, is the right time for such a talk. So much external activity has disappeared and the mind and body should have settled down. The mind should now be inclining towards quiet and peaceful states of mind. So now is the right time to talk about how one should deal with this mind in order to lead it into very useful deep states of peace and bliss.

Many of you have heard my talks on the subject before, so you may hear much that is repeated. But because these talks are not pre-planned there will be information that you have not heard and that will be helpful to you. Anything that helps you to settle the mind, let go of the hindrances, and let go of the world of the five senses will be useful to you. Anything that helps you gain these '*uttarimanussadhamma*', these extraordinary conditions, these superior human states which are worthy of the *Ariyas*, will be very useful to you.

The Roads to Success

I spoke in my last talk about the need for sense-restraint and it goes without saying that sense-restraint gives one the groundwork, the foundation, for taking this mind into a deeper, fuller restraint of the senses, a fuller letting go of the many, many places where the mind dwells. We need to go into a deeper place inside the mind, a place of great peace and bliss, a very profound place which gives you great insights into the nature of the mind. You can then see what the mind is capable of and how it feels to be in those states. You see what those states are and how they come about.

This gives one great insights into a world which we cannot know unless we have been there. These worlds, these *samādhi* states, are so strange compared to the external world that they are very difficult to describe. Those who have not been there find it very difficult to even understand that such states can exist.

One has to start from the very beginning. Having practised some sense-restraint there comes a time when one sits down on one's cushion or stool. Sitting very still, one starts training the mind. That initial training of the mind should begin with what the Buddha called the *iddhipādas*. The *iddhipādas* are the four roads or bases of success or power. The *iddhipādas* are what empowers you to actually succeed in this process of meditation. The *iddhipādas* are the arousing of a desire for the goal. The first *iddhipāda* is *chanda samādhi* – the maintaining of desire for the goal. This is a prerequisite for gaining any success in this meditation. If you do not set yourself a goal, then you will not set up the desire or movement of the mind to achieve that goal, and there will be no results. You do not get to a 'one-pointed mind' by allowing the mind to wander around. The wandering mind will never get close. It needs to be directed, to be pointed in the right direction, and that direction, that 'pointedness' of the mind, has to be done through a very clear resolution.

The most important thing about the *iddhipādas* is that this resolution has to be maintained throughout the course of the meditation. If you make a resolution and you maintain it, then you have got a hope for success. If you make that resolution and after one or two minutes you forget what you are supposed to be doing, what you are aiming for, then it is very easy to turn a corner and go backwards or go sideways and waste a lot of time.

These are very profound states and they need a degree of effort. Not immense effort, but constant effort. So we take our goal and keep it in mind. That generates energy to achieve the goal, it generates the application of the mind onto the goal, and the investigation of *dhammas* that go along with the desire for success. This investigation of the Dhamma is *vīmaṃsa samādhi*, the maintenance of investigating which demonstrates that the path of *samatha* and *vipassanā* is the same. In order to gain

success in meditation you have to also use wisdom. You have to use the desire, the energy, the application of the mind, and the wisdom faculty generated through investigation and inquiry. In order to gain success all of these factors need to be functioning, and they need to be maintained throughout the meditation.

When I define the word *samādhi* as the sustaining of these things, you can see that if you sustain the *iddhipādas* – these roads to success, these functions of the mind – then your meditation will be successful. If you do not maintain these functions of the mind, then the meditation does not succeed – one forgets.

Setting the Goals

It is very helpful at the beginning of the meditation to set a goal clearly in mind – it should be achievable but at the same time test you rather than just sitting down to meditate to see what happens. What happens is that you will probably see a wandering mind, especially if you have not had success in deep states of tranquillity before. Set a goal that becomes the means to generate the *iddhipādas*. Do not be afraid of desiring a goal.

We just chanted the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (SN 56.11), the first sermon of the Buddha. In that sermon, the Buddha talked about the noble truths. The second noble truth is the cause of suffering, *dukkha samudaya*. The cause is craving, which leads to rebirth, which seeks delight here and there, and which is associated with pleasure and lust. That craving is called *kāma taṇhā*: the craving for the delights of the world of the five senses, the craving for existence, and the craving for annihilation. These are the cravings that give rise to rebirth. In contrast the desire or aspiration for *jhāna* to the end of rebirth and is part of the *iddhipādas*, because it generates the Eightfold Path and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

When you have a chance to meditate, make clear what you want to gain from the meditation and keep that goal in mind. *The goal that I encourage is to gain the first jhāna*, because that will equip you with an experiential knowledge of some other-worldly-state. It will also train you to let go of those coarse defilements that we call the hindrances. The coarser defilements are the ones which keep us attached to the

rūpaloka, even though we are only abandoning them temporarily. We have to abandon things temporarily so that we can get used to being apart from them, and then eventually we can abandon them fully. It is just like a person who comes to a monastery temporarily, then goes back into the world again, then returns a second time and a third time, until he gets used to abandoning the world. He can then abandon it fully and permanently. But first it is important to abandon the world at least temporarily, to see what that is like. So, this is the goal that I encourage you to aim for during this Rains Retreat: to gain a *jhāna*, just the first *jhāna*. Having made first *jhāna* one's goal, one then develops the desire, the energy, the application of mind, and the investigation to gain that goal.

Application of the mind is called *citta samādhi*. The mind has many functions; one of these functions is *sati,* or mindfulness. You have to maintain mindfulness throughout the meditation period. The maintenance of mindfulness means that one maintains full knowledge of what one is doing. Always, as it were, checking up on oneself – not on a verbal level, but just by knowing what one is doing and fully experiencing the content of one's consciousness from moment to moment. Mindfulness also means remembering what one is *supposed to be doing* and the goal that one has assigned to the meditation. Mindfulness is maintaining the desire for that goal, the energy, the application of the mind, and the investigation.

If you do not keep a map with you on the journey you will get lost. You need to maintain that map in your mind. That is why it is helpful – in order to maintain the goal and the instructions – to very carefully make a resolution to yourself at the beginning of a meditation. It is well known, even to Western psychology, that if we carefully make a resolution to ourselves we will remember it. For example, by making a resolution three times with as much care and mindfulness as we can, we find that we recall it, and we remember it for a long time. The more effort we put into making that resolution the more impression it makes on our mind and the longer it stays in the mind. By making that firm resolution at the beginning, it shows that we are meticulous in the process of meditation. We will not waste time with the wandering mind.

The Experience of Breathing

So, having made a resolution, this is what you are aiming for: to keep the *iddhipādas* going, to maintain the desire for this state, to maintain the energy; the application of mind, and the investigation. At that point you can start looking at your meditation object. The easiest meditation object you will find to gain *jhāna* will be the breath. You can try other things, but I would encourage you to keep the main object of meditation the experience of breathing. That was the meditation that the Buddha used and that the forest monks in Thailand use. It is the most popular meditation object and there is a reason for that. It is the most convenient way into the *jhāna* states. Other ways may be used, but if you can't sustain your attention on the breathing it is very unlikely that you will be able to sustain your attention on other things. It is the ability of the mind to sustain attention that is the function of *samādhi* and it is that which leads one into *jhānas*. The meditation object is not as important as one's ability to hold it.

If one is going to use the breath, then there are a couple of tricks that are extremely useful. The first 'skilful means' is to make sure that you are watching the feeling of the breath, not the thought of the breath. There is a great difference between experience and commentary. If you get accustomed in your meditation to knowing and staying with the experience and discarding the commentary, then you will find that your mediation becomes much easier. You can discard the commentary throughout the day. Make a resolution that you will try to restrict the commentary you make on life and become more attentive to the bare experience of life. The making of that resolution will arouse the mindfulness necessary to stop the inner conversation. You do not listen to it; you are not interested in it. You are more interested in the actual experience.

Secondly, when you are watching the breath, have the full experience of the breath. Do not think about it. Do not note it; do not say anything about it; just know it. The simpler you can make the meditation object, the more powerful it will become. This is the reason why I encourage you to put your attention on the breath and not to concern yourself about where the experience or feeling is located in your body. If you are concerned about where the breath is located in the body, that concern brings up

too much body-awareness. With body-awareness disturbances of the body will arise, such as painful and pleasant feelings, heat and cold, itches, aches and pains, and other feelings. Whatever those feelings are, this body is a mess of painful and pleasant feelings. It is a cacophony of different sounds, never giving one any respite or peace. So the quicker one can take one's attention from the physical body, the better it is for success in meditation. Just know the experience of breath and do not concern yourself with where it might be in the physical body.

The way to use the experience of breath to take you into a *jhāna* state is as follows. The first task is to be able to sustain your attention fully on the breath. This is getting into *samādhi*, the sustained attention on the coarse object of breathing. This should not be difficult for anyone. If you cannot sustain your attention on the breath, which is a coarse object, then it is impossible to sustain the attention on anything finer, such as the *samādhi nimitta*, the sign of concentration, which arises later. It will be impossible for you to sustain your attention on any aspect of the mind – such as the *khandhas*, the aggregates associated with the mind – enough to gain true insight into their nature. These are very refined things and to be able to fully know them you have to hold them before the 'eyes' of your mind long enough to fully penetrate their depths.

We have to start by developing the ability of the mind to sustain its attention on the coarse breath. This is *a process that requires lots of endurance and persistence*, but here are some helpful hints. I have already mentioned one of them, that is, remembering what we are supposed to be doing, to make sure that mindfulness is very clear. Very often in our meditation the mind wanders off because it forgets what it is supposed to be doing. Imagine there was someone, as it were, just behind you watching every moment and as soon as you wandered off he reminded you, 'You have lost the breath'. You'd find that you would not wander off far. You would be training the mind to stay with the breath. No one else can do that for you, only the mindfulness that you establish through your resolution.

However, there is another important trick, a skilful means that can help you maintain the awareness of the breath. It comes through understanding why the mind wanders

off in the first place. Know the ways of this thing we call the mind. The mind seeks pleasure, happiness, and contentment. If the mind can't find contentment with the breath, it will try to find it elsewhere, it will wander off. Sometimes, no matter how strong our mindfulness is, we find that by trying to force the attention to remain with the breath it just creates tension. This happens because we are forcing the mind against its will to stay in a place where it does not want to be – with the breath. The way to overcome that problem and remain with the breath without needing to constantly apply enormous amounts of mindfulness and will power is to make it enjoyable.

Make the breath a pleasant abiding so that the mind finds happiness and satisfaction by remaining with the breath. We do that by developing the perception of a happy breath, a peaceful beautiful breath. That is not too difficult to do with training. If you can remind yourself, when meditating, to develop the perception of joy and happiness with the breath, you will find that the mind remains on the breath with very little difficulty. One way of doing that is to develop loving kindness towards the breath. Loving kindness towards an object sees only the joyful, beautiful, and positive aspects of that object. If you can develop that positive way of looking at the breath when it comes in and goes out, you will find that the mind will naturally just want to remain with it. It will not be so interested in those other sensory phenomena that try to steal your attention away.

Once one can develop a perception of the breath as a beautiful abiding, one finds it easier to achieve the goal of full awareness of the breath. This goal is achieved when the mindfulness remains continuously with the breath from the very beginning of an in-breath right to its end, noticing any gaps between the in and out-breaths. See the out-breath from its beginning to its end. And so on with the next in-breath, for breath after breath, after breath.

You may notice certain stages in this full awareness of the breath. The first stage is when you are actually holding it with a little bit of force. The reason you have to hold the breath with some sort of force, at this particular time is because the mind is yet to be settled on the breath. The indication of this is that you are aware of other things in the background. This shows you have awareness of other objects – sounds, feelings,

and thoughts – apart from the experience of the breath. It means that the mind is yet to be fully involved in the breath. The mind is still keeping these other things on the backburner, so to speak, 'just in case'. It has not yet fully abandoned interest in those other objects.

One way of overcoming this problem is to maintain the attention on the breath by putting the breath in the centre of your mind's 'field of vision'. I am using 'field of vision' as a metaphor. The mind does not see, the mind experiences, but we have to use a metaphor from the world of sight to talk about the mind. The central object in your mind should always be the breath. If there are any disturbances – disturbances mean anything other than the experience of breath, including thoughts and orders from yourself – keep them on the edge of your awareness. Keep your mind fully focussed on the full experience of the breath, developing joy in this breath. This will keep it centred.

We find that when the mind wanders, it wanders from what was once our centre to one of these peripheral objects. Those peripheral objects, as it were, take over our mind, become the object of our attention, and the breath just disappears off the edge of the screen, like something falling off the edge of the table into the great void. We have lost the breath! However, if we keep the experience of the breath in the centre of our mental screen and maintain our attention there, then it is only a matter of time before all those peripheral objects themselves will fall off the screen and disappear. This is because the result of focussing our attention on one thing is for the mind to narrow down, for the field to get smaller and smaller, until it just sees what is in the centre. What was on the edge becomes completely out of vision and you are left with just the experience of the breath. This is the way one drops attention to the body, drops attention to sounds and such things as thoughts, which can roam around in the mind.

If one focuses just on the breath, on the experience of the breath, and maintains that long enough, everything else disappears, except for the experience of the breath. If everything else has disappeared and we only have the full experience of the breath from moment to moment maintained for a long time, then we know that we have the first level of what really can be called *samādhi*. We have an object and we have

maintained our attention on it. When we have attained to this stage our attention should be relatively effortless because we have already abandoned the disturbances. They have fallen off the screen. We have full attention on a coarse object, the breath. In the Ānāpānasati Sutta (MN 118) that stage is called *sabba-kāya-patisaṃvedī*, experiencing the whole body of the breath. The whole body of the breath means *just the breath*, fully on the breath. Fully means that there is no room for anything else. All other disturbances have no door into the mind at this stage.

It is not all that necessary to develop a perception of a 'beautiful breath' at this stage. It is so peaceful just watching the breath from its beginning to its end. The thoughts have been given up. The sounds have disappeared and the body is no longer disturbing you. Just gaining this much is a great release for the mind. The mind has let go of a lot at this stage, in fact it has let go of many of the hindrances. It has only a little bit of restlessness left to truly overcome.

Once we have got to this stage, we need to know it and maintain it. We need to start the fourth practice in the Ānāpānasati Sutta: the *passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ*, the settling down and tranquillising of the object of meditation. Once we have *samādhi* on the object – *and not before* – we tranquillise or calm the object. If you find that you are unable to maintain your attention on such a fine object, make the object a bit coarser. I remember Ajahn Chah once teaching that if you lose attention on the breath and you cannot find the breath, just stop breathing for a few moments. The next breath will be a very coarse breath and you will find it easy to watch. You have been breathing but the breath became very refined, too refined for you to notice. So you have to stay with a coarser object and keep on that coarser object until you can really maintain full attention on it. Sometimes this is a bit restraining and restricting, because very often at this stage you are getting very close to very beautiful states of mind.

Sometimes you may want to rush forward into a *samādhi nimmitta*, or rush into a *jhāna*. But you will find that if you do not make this stage of full awareness of the breath solid, a *samādhi nimmitta*, once it arises, will very quickly disappear again; and if you do go into a *jhāna*, you will bounce straight out again. That is because the

faculty of the mind to sustain and hold an object for a long period of time – enough for the *jhāna* to fully develop and to maintain itself – has not been developed. We have to constantly train the mind at this stage, on the full awareness of the breath, until we have that ability. If we can maintain full awareness of the breath and all other objects disappear, then we can start to quieten the breath down. We allow the breath to settle, until the physical feeling of the breath starts to give way to its mental counterpart.

The Passive Mind

With experience we begin to see that there seems to be a physical part and a mental part to any experience. When that physical part disappears it reveals the mental part. We begin to experience how the mind 'sees' the breath, not how the body feels the breath. The function of body consciousness disappears. The last of the five senses in their very refined form disappear. The eye, the ear, smell, taste, and bodily feeling have all shut down, except for just the feeling of the breath. The five senses have, as it were, only one thread left, this experience of the breath. Now we are also shutting that one down, as we quieten the breath down.

This is the stage where the *samādhi nimmitta* starts to arise. Only if one has been able to maintain full attention on the breath for long periods of time, will one be able to handle the *samādhi nimmitta*. The ability to maintain attention on the breath for long periods of time needs the passive aspect of the mind. One can say that the mind has two functions. The mind has the passive function to receive information from the senses, what we call 'the function to know', and it also has the active function of interacting, what we might call 'the function to do'. In this meditation, when one gets to these refined stages of mind, the main function has to be just to 'know'. The 'doing' function has to be almost dead, with just the last little piece left, which is finally going to guide the mind into a *jhāna* where the function of 'doing' is completely suppressed and abandoned. In a *jhāna* one just 'knows', one cannot 'do'. The function of the mind that is active has passed away and the function that 'knows', or receives, is the only thing left. So remember that the mind has to be passive in these states, it has to be like a passenger, not a driver. Once one can do this with a coarse breath one can manage to do this with a *samādhi nimmitta* when it arises.

I should mention that the so called *samādhi nimmitta* is not a light but that is the closest description the mind can give to this experience. *It is an object of mind consciousness*, not an object eye consciousness. However, because of its intensity it very often appears as a light. However it is perceived, it is something very pleasant and appealing. The mind has to be able to hold its attention on the *nimmitta* without moving and to do that it has to be very passive. Because any action of the mind to interfere, to control, to do; to order. to make, will disturb that tranquillity of the mind and the *samādhi nimmitta* will disappear. You will be back on the breath or you will go way back to the beginning of your meditation.

I talk like this to plant the instructions in your minds, and so hopefully at the right time, you will remember the instructions and act accordingly. You have to remember at this point that instead of trying to interfere with the *samādhi nimmitta*, you leave it alone and just hold it in your mind. You will then find that you have the ability to hold the *nimmitta*. It doesn't disappear and it doesn't start to change. It is just there from moment to moment to moment. At this point you don't need to put effort into trying to hold the *nimmitta*; the effort will come from the mind itself. The *samādhi nimmitta* will always be attractive to the mind. It's a peaceful experience, a joyful experience, sometimes very blissful, but the sort of bliss that is not going to disturb the mind. If you have *samādhi nimmittas* and they are disturbing the mind, it means that the mind does not know how to hold them when they are very strong. It cannot leave them alone. It is not that the *samādhi nimmitta* or the *pītisukha* disturbs you. It is you disturbing the *pītisukha*. It's just like Ajahn Chah's simile, 'Noise does not disturb you; you disturb the noise.' *Pītisukha* is never disturbing; you're the one who disturbs the *pītisukha*. If you leave it alone it remains because it is the mind doing this.

The Gateway into the Mind

Those of you who like to investigate a lot (*vīmaṃsa*), who have a very well developed faculty of wisdom, will notice at this point that there is a difference between the mind, *citta*, and the delusion of 'self'. All of the disturbances come from your delusion of 'self', that which thinks, controls, and manages. However, the nature of *citta* by itself

– and this is a natural phenomena – will be to go towards the *samādhi nimmitta*, hold on to it, and enter into a *jhāna*. It is you, in the sense of the mirage, which causes the problems. This is one of the reasons that the more one has let go of the sense of 'self', the easier it is to gain *jhānas*. For someone who is a *Sotāpanna*, a *Sakadāgāmī*, an *Anāgāmī* or an *Arahant,* the higher one's attainments, the easier *jhānas* become. For this very reason one should let go of this control that comes from *avijjā*, ignorance, especially from the *avijjā* that is the delusion of a 'self'. The 'self' always wants to control, to speak, to act, or do and it is afraid to let go of very much, simply because that means letting go of itself. So, if you have a very strong wisdom faculty, investigate this point. Not by asking about it, but by observing, and asking yourself, "Why is it that the *samādhi nimmitta* is not stable?" If you can let go of the sense of 'self', just completely abandon all effort to control, to comment, and be completely passive, then the *citta* will do the work. The mind will go on to that *nimmitta* by itself.

The *samādhi nimmitta* is like a gateway into the mind. Because you have just come from the realm of the five senses, the *kāmaloka*, you interpret the *samādhi nimmitta* with the language of the five senses. That is why it appears to be a light. As you maintain your attention on the *samādhi nimmitta*, if you go further from the world of the five senses, the perception of the *samādhi nimmitta* changes. The perception of light disappears and you go to the heart that is just a very pleasant experience which we call *pītisukha*. You do not need to think, "What does *pītisukha* mean?" "What is *pīti*, what is *sukha*?" You cannot know the answer to those questions by looking at the *suttas*. The only way to know what *pītisukha* means, as it appears in the first *jhāna*, is to gain that first *jhāna* and know that at this stage it is the object of the mind. It is the object of mind consciousness, the one thing the mind is aware of. Because *pītisukha* is extremely pleasant, peaceful, and satisfying, the mind finds it very easy to find contentment in that one mental image; so the mind does the work at this stage.

You have to let go not only of *kāmaloka*, the world of the five senses, you have to let go also of that function of 'self' which tries to control. You cannot do any controlling in these *jhāna* states. It is wonderful to behold that experience which is beyond the control of Māra, that Māra which manifests as the delusion of 'self'. Māra is

blindfolded in these states. The illusion of a 'self' wants to struggle to 'be'; and by being, it does, acts, orders; controls, manipulates, and manages what it thinks is its home – that is existence. All that is abandoned. That is why, by gaining a first *jhāna*, you have let go of an enormous amount of the world of suffering, of existence. At this stage you will still be fully aware. The mind is still there, the mind still 'knows'. But at this stage the knowing is a very profound knowing.

The Different Mind

These *jhānas* are very powerful experiences and they will certainly impress themselves on the mind enough for it to very clearly remember what those experiences were when, after some length of time, you emerge from the *jhāna*. The mind stays in *jhāna* because it finds full contentment. At this stage it is satisfied with the *pītisukha*, with the joy of this state. However, there is a defect in that first *jhāna*. You will not notice while in that *jhāna* what the defect is, but you'll notice it after you emerge from the first *jhāna*. The defect is that the mind is not completely still. The mind is moving, towards and away from *pītisukha*, as if it were oscillating around *pītisukha*, because it has not yet fully entered into that state. It is still on the journey into *samādhi*. The mind has not fully settled down. It is still wobbling, echoing, and vibrating from what was happening before in the realm of the five senses. That wobbling of the mind is what we call *vitakka* and *vicāra*. It is not coming from you. It is the mind. *It does not manifest as what we call thinking*. The mind moving towards *pītisukha* is called *vitakka*. The mind holding on to *pītisukha* is what we call *vicāra*. After a while the mind moves away from *pītisukha* and then it has to move back on to it again. It is a very gentle and hardly perceptible movement, to and from *pītisukha*. The mind cannot go very far away; the *pītisukha* remains fully in the mind's eye. It never goes so far that the *samādhi* state is broken and one feels the body.

The *suttas* actually say that the 'thorn' of the first *jhāna* is sound. It will be sound, as the first of the five external senses, which can break the first *jhāna*. Within that state you will be unable to hear what people are saying next to you, because the mind is fully involved in the *pītisukha* object. If a sound is heard, it means that the *samādhi* of that *jhāna* is already very weak and one is about to exit the *jhāna*. When I say fully

involved I stress the word 'fully'. There is no space for the mind to receive any other input. It is fully taken up with the joy and happiness of the *pītisukha*. It does not let it go enough to notice anything else.

These are strange states to experience. It is a mind very different from the mind that has so many things to deal with in the external world. The normal mind has one thing come to its attention only to disappear, and then something else comes up and disappears, and then something else again. The mind normally has such a heavy load, such a burden of information to deal with, but here the mind has just one pleasant object. It is the pleasantness of that object which keeps the mind attached to the *pītisukha*. Do not be afraid of that attachment. It is the attachment that led the Buddha to Enlightenment, which led many *Arahants* to full Enlightenment. At this stage you can't do anything about it anyway. This becomes the experience of the first *jhāna*.

Later on that *vitakka-vicāra*, that last wobbling of the mind, is abandoned. Remember that the first *jhāna* is just less than the second *jhāna*, just less than full *samādhi*, that full 'one-pointedness of *mind'* on the object.

Venerable Sāriputta describes a *jhāna* just in between the first and second *jhānas*, where the movement of the mind onto the object has been abandoned. In that *jhāna* there is no *vitakka*, all that is left is *vicāra*. (See A IV 300 & 440 f, S IV 360-363, D III 219, M III 162). That state is when the mind has *pītisukha* fully and does not move away from it but, as it were, grasps the *pītisukha*. The mind holds on to it, not realising that it doesn't need to grasp it or put forth any effort to hold it. The mind is doing this, not the illusion of 'self'. At this stage it is very common that the mind will let go of the holding and stay there by itself according to natural causes and results. The cause is the inner contentment of the mind, being with the beautiful *pītisukha*; the beautiful happiness and one-pointedness of mind. The mind remains there as a solid object. The mind comes to oneness, comes to a 'point' as it were. These are not things that one knows in this state; it is only when one emerges afterwards – because the experience has impressed itself on your mind – that you can recall it very vividly. It is just as if you remember a very vivid dream. Even more vivid are the experiences

of *jhāna*. You can remember them very clearly after you emerge. It is on emergence from a *jhāna* that you see the jhāna mind as different from anything you have experienced before, in the sense of being fully one. It cannot move. It is like the point of a rock – strong, powerful, blissful, completely immobile – the immovable, immobile mind of the second *jhāna*. You can only know these states afterwards; during the experience the mind remains immobile, just as one thing, as one object. The continuance of the mental object does not change; it just remains one thing moment after moment after moment. The mental object is neither expanding nor contracting; it is not changing in quality but just remaining with that sameness. This I call the 'one-pointedness in time' of the *nimmitta*, the sign of mental consciousness.

We see what is possible with consciousness, with the mind. The only way we can know mind is by knowing its objects. Its objects are what define the mind. Once we know the different objects of the mind, including the *samādhi* objects, then we get some enormous insights and understandings into what this mind truly is, what it is capable of, and what happiness and suffering are. Once we start to get into these states then we know what the Buddha meant by a pleasant abiding. The Buddha sometimes called these states '*Nibbāna* here and now'. The Buddha would also very often equate *Nibbāna* and *nirodha*, cessation. Even though it is not true *Nibbāna*, it is close. Why is it close? It is close because a lot of cessation has already occurred. In these very refined states a lot has ceased, by ceasing it has ended, disappeared, finished. That is why it is very close to *Nibbāna*.

As we develop these states, not only does it give us a pleasant feeling, but it also makes our lives as monks secure. Only when we have the knowledge and experience of *nirāmisa sukha*, the happiness which is apart from the world of things, can we fully have contentment in monastic life. If you have not had the experience of the *nirāmisa sukha*, the happiness of renunciation, your renunciation will always be a struggle. You may be able to renounce on the surface and on the outside, appearing to others to be an excellent monk, but inside the mind still yearns for happiness and satisfaction. You will not stop the mind from searching for that happiness and satisfaction in the world when it hasn't got any other recourse. In one of the *suttas*, (MN 14), Mahānāma, one of the Buddha's cousins, came up to the Buddha and said that even

though he was a Noble disciple passion still invaded his mind from time to time. The Buddha replied that it was because he was still attached to something. He had not given up everything. What he was attached to was *kāmaloka* and that illusory self which seeks for pleasure and control in this world.

So, this is what one has to do, and every one of you here can do it. Don't rush, be patient, be persistent, and these things will happen. You have all got sufficient morality. You have all got sufficient sense-restraint. You can still increase each one of these, but they are sufficient. What one truly needs is this meticulous application of the mind and doing things properly, rather than rushing and doing things sloppily. There is a right way to sew a robe, there is a right way to wash your bowl, and there is a right way to meditate. If you are sloppy then you find that you can waste many years. If you are meticulous, then you will find that progress happens. These things occur through natural causes. You are not a factor; you are just an obstacle to the attainments. So get your 'self' out of the way and allow these things to happen. Then you to will enjoy the bliss of *jhānas*, and your monastic life will be assured. Your power towards insights will be strengthened enormously. In fact, with all your knowledge of the Dhamma, the teachings of the Tipitaka, it is very unlikely that you won't get attainments. As the Buddha said in the Pāsādika Sutta (DN 29), four things can be expected, four benefits, from practising the *jhānas*: the four stages of Enlightenment. So may each one of you gain these *jhānas* and as the result gain the benefits. People who stay in the monastery for the Rains Retreat automatically get the rainy season benefits. So in much the same way, I maintain that if you practice the *jhānas* having enough knowledge of the Dhamma, you will certainly get the four stages of Enlightenment.

Now I will leave it up to you.

2 WHY I TELL SILLY JOKES

Anattā and the Five Khandhas

16th September 1998.

I have previously mentioned the Three Characteristics of Existence, the *ti-lakkhaṇa*, and this evening I want to expand on that by focusing on *anattā* or non-self. I'm doing this so that you can take advantage of the *samādhi* you've developed so far during this Rains Retreat. This will enable you to gain insights into the nature of the mind, the nature of the body, the nature of this universe, and in particular to penetrate into this truth of *anattā*. Penetrating the truth of *anattā* is the most fundamental breakthrough. It is that wisdom, that understanding, which when it's attained, will enable you to know that you are a Stream Winner, a *Sotāpanna*. It will also make the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha abundantly clear. It will give you understanding of what this practice is all about and also where it leads. You'll understand what *Nibbāna* is and how this whole process works.

Focussing on *anattā* (non-self) is a most important part of *vipassanā*, or insight practice. Throughout the retreat, I've stressed that you cannot split *samatha* and *vipassanā*, and even now I'm not expressing this teaching as anything different from *samatha*. I'm just focussing on another aspect of the practice and using the recollection or investigation of *anattā* as a means of penetrating truth, as a means of developing deeper and deeper calm in the present moment. Every deep insight that you gain should lead to peace and the peace that it brings is a measure of that insight.

Sometimes people like to measure insight with convincing arguments and descriptions, or by their brilliant Dhamma talks or books. That is not a measure of insight at all. I've known many people who have written brilliant books without having any deep insight at all. And knowing the nature of their lives you can see that the understanding they have is basically borrowed from someone else. It is not their own. The measure of insight is the ability to make the mind very peaceful and calm.

Anyone who experiences deep insight will have no trouble at all in gaining *jhānas*.

Anyone who claims the experience of insight and cannot access those *jhānas* – for me anyway – has only superficial insight. Anyone who can gain *jhānas* should be gaining deep insight. At the very least insight into the nature of this mind, and how the mind plays with the outside world and its senses to its own detriment. When the mind keeps to its own home inside, it experiences far less *dukkha* and trouble.

The String of Pearls

This evening I want to focus on that practice which uncovers *anattā*, the truth of non-self. Many people are not able to fully understand the word *anattā*. We only fully understand the meaning of these words when the experience arises. All the words that I can use to describe *anattā* are only pointing in the direction of the meaning. This is sometimes a problem when people mistake the words for the whole meaning and they don't follow those words to see where they are pointing. *Anattā* is the truth that this sensory experience, by which we can know the world, is without a being, without a person, without a 'self'. As a result of that there is nothing that owns, possesses or controls. All that we take to be 'me' is just a misconception. All that we take to be 'mine' results from that misconception. As a result of taking all this to be 'mine' we suffer; we weep and wail when things do not go according to our plans and wishes.

To understand deeply the nature of non-self and to train ourselves, the Buddha gave us the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22). The whole purpose of *satipaṭṭhāna* is to uncover this illusion of 'self'. Rather than an illusion I'd like to call it a delusion. I'll just pause here a moment to mention the difference between illusion and delusion. To me anyway, illusion is pointing out that there is absolutely nothing there and we're making something out of just emptiness. As I understand the Dhamma, *anattā* is not illusion it is a delusion. The *anattā* delusion arises because there is something there but we misinterpret it to be a 'self', a 'being', a 'me'. What we misunderstand as being 'me' or 'mine' is actually just a process.

The word process is the nearest that we can get to describing the cause and effect relationship that occurs on the level of body and mind without there being any core to that cause and effect. One cause arising produces an effect and that effect completely vanishing causes another effect some time in the future, with nothing in between. It's

just like a string of pearls that has no string through them. If we look closely between two of those adjacent pearls, there's a space, nothingness. When we can see that space of nothingness we understand there is nothing joining those things together except, perhaps, just the process of cause and effect. That's all, but that's something that is very hard to see. One of the reasons it's so hard to see is because people aren't looking in that area. It is the nature of the defilements, of the *kilesas*, to stop us looking in that area, to put up all sorts of barriers and obstacles which, when they're removed, can undermine the self's very reason for existence.

Those barriers and obstacles need to be overcome. One of the means to overcoming them is *paññā*, or wisdom, some understanding of the Buddha's teaching. Another way is confidence and faith, just believing in those teachings. Even though a person may have been a Buddhist, even a Buddhist monk or nun, for many years, sometimes they don't have that full confidence in the Lord Buddha's teachings. The Buddha said that the five *khandhas*, starting with *rūpa*, the body, are not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. *Vedanā*, sensation, is not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. *Saññā*, perception, *saṅkhāra*, mental formations, and *viññāṇa*, consciousness, are not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. Yet still some people take consciousness, 'that which knows', to be 'me', to be 'mine', to be a 'self'. They take the 'doer' to be 'me', to be 'mine', to be a 'self'. They take perception as if they are doing the perceiving, and they take *vedanā*, this feeling of pleasure or pain with each one of the six senses, as personal. "I hurt, I'm in pain, I am disturbed", and from that you can see how craving and the whole problem of existence arises. Even this body is taken to be a self, 'my body'. That's one reason we are sometimes so concerned with what food we put inside our bodies.

When a person has this delusion of a 'self' in these five areas, it means that they'll be creating a whole heap of craving, clinging and suffering. The Buddha taught that it takes *paññā*, and *saddhā*, or faith, in order to overcome this delusion. So how about following the Lord Buddha's instructions? How about looking at these things as 'non-self'? How about focusing on areas of existence that because of the Lord Buddha's teachings you know are the areas you should put your attention on?

What Do I Take Myself to Be?

Sometimes people have so little confidence in the Buddha that they even think they've completely abolished the view that 'self' is identical to the body, or the 'self' is in the body, or the 'self' controls this body of ours. The Lord Buddha said in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, that you should really look at this body and say: "Is there anything in here that I take to be a 'self', that I take to be 'me', that I take to be 'mine'?" Don't come to a conclusion too quickly.

Take the body as a focus of your contemplation and by contemplation I mean just focussing your awareness on the body and noticing how you relate to it. Notice how you think about this body, notice what you do with it, as if you truly are stepping back from this whole process of mind and body. See the connection between them, see how the delusion of 'self' connects and controls the body. It needs the sustained application of 'insight practice', just looking or observing the attitudes you have to your body. There comes a time when you start to see the very deep and subtle attachments, the very, very fine threads of delusion, which make this body a problem. You can make this body 'mine', you can make this body 'me'. These delusions are deep and profound and they've been there for a long time. These delusions are hidden but they can be seen, they can be extricated or disentangled.

That is why early on in my practice I very quickly discarded the technique of asking, "Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?" because straight away I saw that "Who am I?" was implying that 'I' was something or someone. It was the wrong question to ask because implicit in that question was the assumption that I was something. I was not quite sure of what I was but it was something. My way of developing insight into *anattā* was to ask myself, "What do I take myself to be?" The question, "What do I take myself to be?" was seeing – in the realm of perception, cognition and view – what I actually thought I was, what I believed I was. I was uncovering layers and layers of delusion and, as I watched this body, I saw how I thought about this body, how I viewed this body. Sometimes it shocked me to see that after all these years of practise, having read all of these things and having given talks about *anattā*, I was still taking this body to be 'me', to be 'mine', to be a 'self'.

I noticed this whenever concern arose about the body, about its health, its longevity,

about what it looked like. If someone called me fat or if someone called me skinny or someone made jokes about me – about my race; about my gender, about whatever – if that rattled me in the slightest it was because I still had a view of self towards this body. I still had perceptions, I still had thoughts about this body being something to do with 'me' or 'mine' – especially if any pain occurred in the body or I started worrying about the safety of this body. I was not willing to let this body go. What you attach to is what you won't let go, what you can't let go, what you want to carry on with, what you protect and what you control. All of this is what comes about from the delusion of a 'self'.

People sometimes think they aren't afraid of death, but when things are threatening, when they come face to face with a tiger or a cobra, that is when they find out whether they are afraid of death or not. In my early meditations I used to imagine myself in such situations with snakes or tigers. I would seek out dangers, on the level of imagination, to see if I really did think this body was a 'self' or not. I wanted to see how I actually related to this body and whether I truly perceived or thought of it as 'self'. The Buddha said that one should practise *satipaṭṭhāna* on the body to know this body as it truly is: know it to the extent that this is just a body, it's not 'me', it's not 'mine', and it's not a 'self'.

Picking up the Gold

It's interesting, especially when we develop deep meditation, to notice how random perception is. Why, of all of the available things to be perceived, do we choose this and not the other? We can see that we are creatures of habit, we perceive according to habit. We perceive this way and not another way because of so much habitual conditioning. Our race, our gender, our upbringing, our experiences all make us choose from 'the shelf of available options' just one or two. So often people choose the same options. It is like going is going to a supermarket shelf where there are so many different sorts of breakfast cereal and yet choosing the same one or two brands. Every time we look at the mind or at the body, we accept the same perception and miss so much more. That's why deep *samatha* meditation, especially *jhānas*, blows away those habits. Instead of always taking the same breakfast cereal from the shelf, in that simile, after the experience of *jhānas*, we try others. We see all the products on

the shelf and we know how this whole thing works. Our mind is wide and deep and so powerful that we can do these things.

Investigating perception is a wonderful way of developing the wisdom that breaks the illusion of 'self'. It's not only that we think and perceive as an '**I**', but we perceive in such a way that we sustain that delusion. Basically, when we have the delusion of 'I' we want to keep it. There is a simile in the Pāyāsi Sutta (DN 23). Two friends go to a deserted town looking for treasure and they find some hemp and decide to take it away. On the way home one of the men finds some linen, so he throws down the hemp and puts the linen on his head instead. The other man, thinking he had gone to all the trouble of making a well bound up bundle, decided to continue on with the hemp. Further on they found some copper, then some silver, then some gold. The man who had the hemp on his head said "This hemp is good enough for me", but the other friend would always change what he had for that which was worth more. When they got back home the one who brought back the gold was well received by his friends and relations, but the man who only brought back the hemp was driven from the village. We've often had our perceptions for a long time and, because they're well 'bound up', we carry 'them on our head' as if they were ours. We refuse to let them go to pick up a new perception. We've had these perceptions, especially the way we look at the world, our views and the way we perceive according to those views, for so long that we refuse to put them down and pick up the gold. When we do insight meditation based on deep states of tranquillity, we have the ability to put down the old bundles of hemp we've been carrying around for lifetimes and pick up the gold.

We need the quietness and stillness of the powerful mind experienced after *jhānas* – the experience after the five hindrances are abandoned – and then the mind can see things in a different way. The mind is so still that it very easily breaks free from the old ways of looking and we get deeper and deeper. Looking deeper means, as it were, taking off those old wrappers, those old perceptions, old views, old ideas. Uncovering the Dhamma, which is wrapped in all our old conditioning, we get to levels that we've never seen before. That's basically what insight is, seeing deeply into the nature of things to the point where it's new; it's something we haven't uncovered before. We go deeper and deeper and deeper, until we find that what we are seeing is exactly what

is described in the *suttas*. It is what the Buddha and the *Arahants* have been teaching us all along but which we had not accepted. *Rūpa* (body) is not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. *Vedanā* (feeling) and *saññā* (perception) are not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. *Saṅkhāra* (mental formations) are not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. *Viññāṇa* (consciousness) is not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. We go deeper into the *saṅkhāras*, into thoughts and ideas.

How many people fight wars over ideas, over arguments on who is right and who's wrong? If we take all these thoughts, all these ideas to be ours, then we'll argue. If we take them to be ours we will think there is a right and wrong there. We should know that they are only thoughts and ideas; some are more accurate than others because they are pointing to reality, but they aren't reality.

Sometimes we should look at the thoughts and ideas that arise in our minds with the tool of "What do I take to be 'me', to be 'mine', to be 'self'". Often we'll be surprised at the thoughts or ideas we are taking to be 'me', to be 'mine', to be a 'self'. This is who I am: this is my thought, my idea, and these are my views. You can very easily define yourself by your thoughts and ideas.

Sometimes it's good, if you think you are a Buddhist, to go and see a born-again Christian who challenges you. Many years ago when I was staying in our old *vihāra* (dwelling place) in Perth with Ajahn Jagaro, there was a letter drop in our mail box from a local born-again Christian group. They were giving a film presentation of the '*Orange People Exposed'*, '*Hinduism Exposed'*, '*Buddhism Exposed'*, and strangely enough '*Iridology Exposed'*. I don't know what they had against iridology but that was also included. Everyone was invited and I wanted to go, I asked Ajahn Jagaro, "Can I go? I would like a bit of fun", but Ajahn Jagaro wouldn't let me. I was disappointed. It would have been good fun, but it would also have been a test to see whether I would be rattled in the midst of so many people who had such completely different views from me. If one is rattled, if one is upset or concerned, one sometimes gets angry or irritated at a view, at an idea. Why? It's because we are taking our own views and ideas to be 'me', to be 'mine', to be a 'self'. We should look at these things and ask, "What do I take to be 'me'?"

The Delusion of Freedom

'That which does', the 'doer', lies very deep inside us. I focus on this choice and freedom because it is a deep part of the delusion of self. It is the reason our Western world, in its delusion, fights for individual freedoms, as if there were any individual freedoms. The freedom to choose, the freedom to be in control of our affairs, is just a delusion. How many people are really free in the West to choose what they want? How many people are completely in the power of advertisements, cultural inducements, peer pressure, conditioning from their youth or from their past lives? How many people are truly free? The answer is only *Arahants*. The choices that we make and the decisions that we take are wonderful things to focus on. Watch yourself choosing to move your legs, or choosing to scratch yourself on the cheek, or choosing this word rather than that word. What's doing this? Where does this come from? Where does this originate? What chooses? Please never say 'who' chooses, because that implies a being in there somewhere. What chooses? Where does it arise? To be able to see that, you need a very quiet mind, a very peaceful mind.

One of the problems people have when they try to do insight meditation and gain deep insight, is not sustaining the attention for long enough. *If the mind can't watch the breath for five minutes without wandering away, how can it ever sustain the attention on an object of insight long enough to really uncover it*? Five minutes is not enough. We have to watch the meditation object for hours, to see it coming and going. We have to sustain our attention long enough to gain enough data to suspend our old ideas and beliefs – long enough to see the truth. In the simile of the lotus, the sun has to warm the petals of the lotus for long enough for the innermost petals to open up. The mind has to sustain its attention for a long time on something like choice or intention (*cetanā*) – one of the most important *saṅkhāras* – before you can fully understand it, comprehend it and see it for what it is. *Cetanā* is conditioned. We know *cetanā* is conditioned because when we get into *jhānas cetanā* stops.

Once you start to see *cetanā* as being conditioned, it makes you doubt that it's you who is doing this and you also start to see exactly what *cetanā* is. Remember, I said that this is the delusion of a 'self'. *Cetanā* is real but we mistakenly take it to be a

‘self’, we add something to it that isn’t there. It’s just like a mirage: it’s real light reaching your retina but we misunderstand it to be something else. It is the same with this *cetanā*, the ‘doer’, or rather ‘that which does’, choice. Look deeply at it again and again and you start to find out why you say these things, why you do these things repeatedly. We do it because we did it before; we say it because we said it before. Habits – because we got pleasure there before, the mind seeks pleasure there again. We finally see that we can’t stop this because it is conditioned. It comes from beyond us, beyond a ‘self’, beyond a ‘me’.

Sometimes people ask the question, and it’s a very good question, “If *cetanā* is completely conditioned, how on earth can we stop it and get enlightened?” We can stop it because the Buddha existed and because we have his teachings. That Enlightenment of the Buddha produces a condition to stop our *cetanā*. Without the Enlightenment of the Buddha it would be nearly impossible for us to create the intention ourselves to end *saṃsāra*. Because of the conditioned nature of *cetanā*, if it doesn’t get conditioned by the Buddha, it would just go around and around, it would be self-sustaining. It needs some external input to break this cycle, and that comes from the *Arahants*, it comes from the Buddha.

It’s interesting to watch *cetanā*. I’ve mentioned to people some of the experiences that I have had with *cetanā*, with my will. Early on I really thought that I was in control of this body and mind. If I decided to do something, I did it. But one of the things that really rocked me in my early years was how much I was a creature of habit, a creature of conditioning. In the hippy era I was a rebel. I thought I was being an individual, making my own choices. That’s what rebelliousness is all about, making your own choices rather than following what everyone else is doing. Then I went to a rock festival and found that everyone else was dressed in the same way as me, they had the same hairstyle with beards, beads, and green velvet trousers. I wasn’t the only one. Maybe I was the only one with green velvet trousers in Acton but not on the Isle of Wight during the festival. I realized that I was just wearing a uniform and from that moment I started to see that it was just a physical, external thing. How much of your mind is just you wearing a uniform? With your choices, with your thoughts, you’re the same as everybody else, just like sheep. I remember a

monk telling me once that his father was a farmer and he had worked on the farm. One day he found a whole line of sheep completely circling a thicket of bushes in the middle of a field. They couldn't see to the other side of the bushes, so they were all walking around in a circle. He didn't know how long they had been there following the one in front in an unbroken circle, but he suspected that if he hadn't broken the circle they would still be there today, just walking around one following after the other. That's a wonderful simile for our mind just following one thought after another, one choice after another, round and round *saṃsāra*. Being a farmer he managed to take hold of one of the sheep and pull it out, breaking the line. In that simile, the farmer stands for the Buddha taking out one bit of delusion to stop this whole circular process of conditioning.

Look at 'that which does' and ask yourself, is that what you take yourself to be? Is it important that you have the freedom to choose? Are you afraid of being 'brain washed' and someone else taking over your choice? Are you afraid of surrendering to the *vinaya* or the rules of the monastery? Why? Isn't it that you are taking the choice to be yours? You think you want to be independent, but basically you are under the illusion that *cetanā* is a 'self', a 'me' or 'mine'.

Why I Tell Silly Jokes

I once had the opportunity to visit one of the *Arahants,* Taungpulu Sayadaw. I was with some other monks in Bangkok and we heard that he was in town so we went to see him. He was there and so we went up to chat with him. There was an interpreter present and the other two monks with me asked questions, silly questions I thought, so I asked the silliest question. I only had the chance to ask one question of this great monk, Taungpulu Sayadaw. I was cheeky enough to ask him, "Who is answering these questions"? Taungpulu answered straightaway, "*nāma*". Even though he only spoke Burmese I understood the Pāli word *nāma*: Mind, that's all. It's mind, just a process, it's not Taungpulu answering. That really hit me. When you ask questions of these great monks they sometimes give answers that you don't expect!

So these are the things that I contemplate again and again and again. We see that there's no one answering these questions, it's just *nāma*, just mind, not a thing, not a

person, just a process, 'that which chooses'. Look closely at choice because from choice we get control. Choice is attachment, control is craving and it's what creates *saṃsāra*. You can't be choice-less. That was one of Krishnamurti's many mistakes: 'choice-less awareness', he chose to be choice-less. Choice is there, *cetanā* exists, but we need to see its causes. When we see where it comes from, we realise it's not coming from 'me', it's not coming from a 'god'. It's not coming from anything, it's just cause and conditioning. There are many reasons why I talk like this. If you want to know why I tell silly jokes, it's because my father used to tell silly jokes. It's conditioned, so don't blame me. Once we start to see all of this we understand about *saṅkhāra* not being a 'self', not being 'me', or 'mine'. If it's not ours we can let it go. That's the test to find out if we've truly seen *anattā*.

If we've truly seen that this body is not ours, we can let it go, we can let it die. If someone comes along with a gun and they're about to shoot us, if there's no escape, "Okay, let them shoot". We can be without fear because we know this body is not ours. In the same way if someone comes to steal our car and we can't stop them, "Okay, off you go, it's not mine". It belongs to the Buddhist Society and hopefully the insurance company will buy us a new one if it gets stolen. If they don't it doesn't matter, we just won't go into Nollamara on a Friday evening. Great! We should look upon our body in the same way as the monastery car – it's convenient but we don't own it.

Whatever it is, if we see that we are losing it and we are afraid, or we can't let it go, that means we take it to be ours, there's a 'self' in there somewhere. Can we let go of choice? Can we for example let the senior monk do all the choosing? Why not? Or even deeper, can we stop choosing? When you are meditating, can you let go of *cetanā* when you're practising *samādhi?* What I'm asking is can you enter *jhānas?* In a *jhāna* choosing ceases, we're not doing anything, the mind isn't moving.

Cetanā moves the mind, it wobbles the mind, it disturbs the mind. In *jhānas* the mind is at ease, not moving; you can call it 'choice-less awareness'. Choice-less awareness in *jhānas* is the moment where there is no choice. There's no new *cetanā* appearing, just the old *cetanā* from before the *jhāna*. People sometimes pull me up on this and

say that in the Anupada Sutta (MN 111, 4) Venerable Sāriputta knew in first *jhāna* that *cetanā* was there. I gave a simile some years ago about where *cetanā* fits into *jhāna*. It's like shooting an arrow, you aim and you let it go. The 'aim' is there; it exists throughout the arrows flight until it hits the target. But once the arrow is shot from the bow it cannot change its course. The *cetanā* is fixed, the 'aim' is fixed, the 'aim' you could say is carried with the arrow until it hits the target. The same applies to *jhānas*; you have *cetanā*, but once the *jhāna* begins – the arrow has left the bow and is flying, carrying that *cetanā*, but is unable to be changed until the flight of that mind state ends and the *jhāna* breaks. That's how *cetanā* exists within a *jhāna*: it is immovable, unable to be activated. To see 'that which does' as not 'me or mine', not 'self', is enough to be able to let it go and be able to abide without thinking, without doing, allowing the process to stop.

Ajahn Chah's famous simile is of a leaf that only moves because of the wind blowing. The nature of the leaf is to be still. Take away the wind and the leaf wobbles less and less until it comes to stillness. Take away *cetanā*, which is the wind in that simile, and the mind wobbles less and less until it stops in *jhāna*. That's what the *jhānas* are, the mind stopping and not moving. Those who still haven't seen the *cetanā* as not-self will have a hard time with *jhānas*. Contemplate, give rise to insight into non-self, 'that which does', as not 'me', not 'mine', not 'me' doing these things. I'm not choosing these things. Investigate that, until such time as you can see this *cetanā* as just a process; it's got its causes, it's got its effects, and you see them all. It's not me!

The Last Citadel

There is another place, which is the last citadel of the 'self'. The 'self' is in a castle, its own medieval castle. Castles have a citadel or keep, the strongest part of the castle or fort with all the castle walls around it. Outside the walls are moats and defences. That's what it's like trying to come to the citadel of the 'delusion of self'. You go through barrier after barrier until you finally come to the heart where the delusion of 'self' hangs out. This is the last place and Māra will defend it almost to the death. That self is the 'doer' and even more so the 'knower', 'that which knows', 'that which experiences', the *viññāṇa*, the *citta*, whichever you like. Do you take 'that which experiences' to be you? Do you think it is 'me' behind the eye when you're seeing, or

‘me’ listening behind the ears, or ‘me’ inside the body feeling all these pleasures and pains through the sense of touch or ‘me’ experiencing the thoughts? You have to investigate this consciousness, the ‘knowing’, and ask the question, “Do I take this to be a ‘self’, to be ‘me’ or ‘mine’?”

The more you know and experience, the bigger the illusion of ‘self’ becomes. “I’ve been there, I’ve done that.” “I know all this; I’ve experienced all of that.” See ‘that which knows’ as not being ‘me’, not being ‘mine’, not being a ‘self’. Test that understanding by seeing if you can let go of ‘knowing’, let go of experiencing. When you can put it down, that’s when you understand it’s not ‘me’, not ‘mine’, not a ‘self’”. Can you put down seeing or thinking about seeing, hearing or thinking about hearing, smelling or thinking about smelling, tasting or thinking about tasting, touching or thinking about touching in your meditation, or does every sound disturb you? Or, as Ajahn Chah said, do you disturb every sound? If so, why? It’s because you still take consciousness – here the consciousness of the five senses – to be yours, to be you. I am hearing this; if I don’t hear this I disappear. That’s the reason you won’t let go of experiencing this body. If I don’t experience this body and everything shuts down, then I don’t exist. That’s why we can’t let go. If we could understand that consciousness, the mind knowing, is not ‘me’, not ‘mine’, not a ‘self’, we could let it go. That way we can get into *jhānas* easily. This is nothing to do with ‘me’; look at what you take to be a ‘self’, the ‘doer’ or the ‘knower’.

There will come a time especially after deep meditation when you look at all these five *khandhas*, especially the ‘doer’ and the ‘knower’, and you will see to the very depths that there is not a person there, not a being; it doesn’t belong to you; it’s completely conditioned. A very common simile for the *jhānas* is the simile of the lake. When there are ripples on the surface there’s activity, the mind is not at peace. When we are looking at the lake without any ripples, when the surface is absolutely smooth without any movement or agitation either on the surface or in the water, the mind is at peace. Only then can we look into the water and see to the very depths of the water. If there is any movement it creates distortion in the water, the light gets bent, and we can’t really see clearly what’s at the bottom. Sometimes mud is stirred up at the bottom making it cloudy, but when that water becomes absolutely still and

it's been still for a long time, all the mud settles and the water is crystal clear as a result of stillness. We can then look into the water and we can see clearly without delusion, without things being bent and distorted. We can see clearly right to the very bottom of that body of water. Only after *jhānas* can we see clearly right into the bottom of this mind, right into the bottom of 'knowing' and 'doing'. We can see that there's nothing there, just a process arising and passing away.

If you really see the process that delusion takes to be 'me' or 'mine' or 'self', not only do you see the truth of *anattā* but you also understand how *saṃsāra* works. You see how the process is not a path with a heart; this is a path without any heart. It might not be very amenable to lay people, but the *anattā* path is a path without any heart whatsoever. If you see that process you can understand how it can generate future births, how the process can go on and on. People who understand *anattā* understand rebirth as well. Being able to see *anattā* is to also understand Dependent Origination, cause and effect, that process which people misunderstand to be a 'self', to be 'me', to be 'mine'.

Looking at all of these things in terms of what do I take to be 'self', to be 'me', to be 'mine', seeing that these are the things in experience that one takes to be a 'self', helps understand why one can't let them go. Just knowing that much, focusing on that and uncovering the delusion, having that still mind so you can see right to the very bottom of the lake, you see that there is no one there, there's nothing. Knowing is just a process of consciousness; no one is 'doing', it's just *cetanā*. Then like Bāhiya (Ud 1.10), you will know that in the seeing there is just seeing; there is no one doing the seeing or choosing to do the seeing. In hearing, smelling, tasting, touching; there is just hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. No one is doing the touching, no one is experiencing the touching; it's just consciousness and mind objects, or mind activity. It's not an 'essential mind', not an 'original mind', it's just a process. When you see that you'll be free.

Be careful with 'knowing' or 'doing' because it's always as if you're behind a screen and the world is outside. It's easy to see that the world beyond is not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self', but we also need to see the world inside. It's like following the

beam of a projector, not just looking at the screen where the movie is, but looking back at where this movie is coming from, and seeing it's just a machine making all these illusory images of sight, sound, smells, tastes, touches, thoughts and mind objects. It's just like a movie that's all. It's not real. We add the reality to it, we make the 'self'; we construct it through *papañca* (proliferation).

When we see all of that, tracing the thing to its source and seeing that it is completely empty, then like Bāhiya we can live not taking up anything in the world as a 'self', as 'me', or 'mine'. There comes the end of rebirth. You know Stream Winning when you've seen how stupid you were for so many lifetimes taking something to be a 'self', usually the 'doer' or the 'knower'. You've seen that, you've uncovered it; you know the stupidity of it. You know that it's only a matter of time before perception and thought fall into place. You know that *saṃsāra* is doomed when through each of these senses, each of these *khandhas*, you don't even perceive or think for a moment that these things are anything to do with a 'self', or with 'your' mind. You know it's just a process, that's all.

It becomes like the simile of a meteor circling around the Solar System for so many millions of years, so many hundreds of millions of years, and then suddenly it strikes the atmosphere of the earth and goes out in a blaze of light. That's it, it's finished, gone. Just as the *Arahants*: having gone around *saṃsāra* for millions, tens of millions, countless millions of times, until they meet the Dhamma. They meet the Dhamma and go out in a brilliant blaze of teaching.

You know that you cannot claim Stream Winner falsely. If you tell another person that you're a Stream Winner and it's just boasting and you don't really believe it, it's a *pārājika* offence (the gravest offences proscribed by the monastic rules of discipline) and you have to leave the monkhood for the rest of your life.

So please focus on the contemplation of *anattā*. What do I take to be 'me', to be 'mine', to be a 'self' in terms of the five *khandhas* and the six senses, not as an intellectual exercise but as a tool to uncover things you've yet to see as a monk.

3 DETOXIFYING THE MIND

2nd of February 2000

The ordination ceremony, bringing into being two new bhikkhus, that we performed here on Sunday afternoon is fresh in my mind. Part of that ordination ceremony is a little chant which the *upajjhāya* (preceptor) performs at the very end of the ordination. It is a very lovely chant, an exposition of the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha, on the four things never to be done and the four resources or supports of a monk. That chant in Pāli is one of my favourites, and it's a shame I only do it once a year. It reminds me of the four resources for the basic life style of a Buddhist monk: alms food, lodging at the root of a tree, robes made of rags, and just simple medicine made from fermented urine. The simplicity of those four requisites always inspires me, even though we don't live like that in this monastery. Nevertheless, it does tell us what the original simplicity of monastic life was all about and, when we hear such teachings, it encourages us to lean towards that simplicity, rather than inclining towards abundance and having many possessions.

The way of the world is to have many possessions, the more possessions the better. They may be convenient but usually they become a nuisance. We're always falling over things, preparing things, and maintaining things. The simplicity of the monastic life in the time of the Buddha is something which is worth bearing in mind. It's a simplicity that gives rise to freedom. The more things we have the more complicated our life is, and the less we experience the beautiful spaces that we call freedom. At the very end of the ordination ceremony the Buddha gave a very powerful and very beautiful Dhamma teaching for the new monks. I will focus this evening's talk on those verses.

The Path

There were many different ways that the Buddha taught the Dhamma. *Sīla* (virtue), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom) have all been perfectly expounded. Making them the perfect exposition means we don't really need to look very much further than the Buddha's description of the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. This is the path of Buddhism: to have perfect ethical conduct, perfect concentration in meditation, and perfect wisdom.

Sometimes when we talk about *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā* in that way – about virtue, meditation and wisdom – people mistake the root meaning of those terms. *Sīla* is all about letting go, abandoning those tendencies of bodily speech and bodily action that are based upon things like craving, sensuality, anger, pride and jealousy. All of the things that arise out of the negative emotions are cut off by the practice of *sīla*. In the beginning the practice of *sīla* may tend to make you feel that you are confined, because you cannot express yourself as you used to be able to. But really what you are doing is confining the defilements and the cravings in the mind. You're disciplining them and putting them in jail in order to and destroy many of those negative emotions of the mind which create so many problems for yourself and for others. The practice of *sīla* is no more than letting go of sensory desire, ill will and delusion. It's letting go of the coarser manifestations of those things.

When the Buddha talked about meditation he talked about deepening the practice of letting go. Anyone who has practised meditation will know that there are many obstacles to the quiet mind. And those obstacles are only overcome through this aspect, or this movement of the mind, that we call letting go. All the cravings and desires come from a sense of 'self' trying to control the world, trying to manipulate the world in order to seek illusory happiness that it thinks it can manufacture and keep. It's the basic delusion of human beings and of all other beings in the cosmos. All beings think they can manufacture, attain and keep happiness. All beings tend to reach out for happiness, but it's always just a little bit ahead of them. We hang on to the hope that one day we may be able to find this illusive happiness 'out there' somewhere. That is the illusion that keeps the mind thinking, keeps the mind planning. We keep the mind going out into the world, rather than stopping the mind thinking, calming the mind and keeping it in here inside.

The Buddha perfectly expounded *samādhi*, the deep teaching on meditation. *Samādhi* is all encompassing, so powerful, it goes deeply into the 'letting go' states of the mind, into states that are far beyond the world. The *jhāna* states are so different from the way consciousness reacts to the world. *Jhāna* states change from one to the other, into what are called the *arūpa jhānas*: states of infinite space, of infinite

consciousness – or as I would prefer to say, unbounded space, unbounded consciousness, the space of nothingness, neither perception nor non-perception.

All these things are so refined and yet they are no more than stages of 'letting go'. They are the results of abandoning things temporarily. As *sīla*, or virtue, is abandoning the coarse, so *samādhi* is abandoning the refined. The more we let go the more peace there is in the mind. The more profundity there is in the mind, the closer one gets to that which is truly the goal of religion, just truth and otherworldly reality, that which is profound. We're going to the root of things, getting to the heart of the things that make this world tick. By going to the root of things you get perfect understanding, perfect wisdom. That perfect understanding differs from the letting go of *samādhi,* of meditation, because the letting go done in *samādhi* is only temporary. But when we come out of *samādhi*, we come out with wisdom. We are cutting off the negative qualities of mind, such as greed, sensory desire; lust; anger, ill will, pride, jealousy, and fear. We're cutting all these off once and for all. Gone forever!

It's strange that in the world people think that lust is good. They sometimes even think that anger is good. They never imagine there could be a state where one can exist without these things. People very often think the best that can be done is to repress or suppress these movements of the mind. But people who have trodden the path of the Buddha know that one can live in this world without lust, without any anger, without any fear, without any pride, and without any ill will towards other living beings, no matter what they do to you. This becomes a very inspiring state, which truly deserves the word 'saintliness'. The word saint actually comes from the Pāli word *santa*, which means calm, peaceful. Peacefulness is the result of 'that which moves the mind' being abandoned. When 'that which moves and shakes the mind' is abandoned, there is only the natural peacefulness, not forced but coming as the automatic response to the abandonment of anything that can move the mind. The mind is truly unshaken and unshakable, and only such a person truly deserves the title of saint, or peaceful one.

As the Buddha perfectly explained, the threefold practice of Buddhism is *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* – virtue, meditation and wisdom. The focus of this practice is not

just what you do but why you do it. So often for example, when I give you a task to do in the morning work period, if I explain why you are doing it and what the purpose of it is, it makes it so much easier to do a good job. It's important in the practice of a Buddhist monk, not just to know what you are supposed to do, but to know why you are doing it. That illustrates and makes quite clear just how you are supposed to live this life, what the purpose is, and why. One of my favourite passages is not just in the ordination chant, but is scattered throughout the *suttas* and the Vinaya Pitaka, repeated by the Lord Buddha many times on different occasions. The Buddha said that this whole triple practice of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, which is just a summarization of the Eightfold Path is to overcome the intoxications of the mind. It's a beautiful phrase, the intoxications of the mind.

Overcoming Intoxications

Some people in the world love to be intoxicated. Not just through substances like alcohol or drugs, but also by the beauty of a member of the opposite sex. Intoxicated by the pleasure of a beautiful symphony, or intoxicated by the beauty of a sunset. The Buddha said we should abandon all intoxication, because as the very name suggests, it means you are bringing toxins into the body – you are intoxicating yourself. These are the poisons of the mind. What does it mean, 'poisoning the mind'? It means bringing the mind to a sense of suffering and disease; this is the lack of ease, the lack of peace in the mind. Whenever you become intoxicated there is always a hangover afterwards and it's in the hangover of intoxication where we can really see the suffering of these things. When there is a beautiful relationship it must end one day, but the more you are intoxicated by that relationship, the more severe the hangover will be. The more you enjoyed the beautiful music, the harder you will feel its loss when it ends. Each of these things the Buddha said are intoxications of the mind. To overcome those intoxications one needs a sense of peace and stillness, the happiness of which far exceeds the exhilaration of the five-sense world.

This peace and stillness far exceeds any of the happiness of the world. That's why I keep on pressing the point for monks, novices, *anagārikas* and visitors to the monastery, to deeply experience the stages of 'letting go meditation'. This is not just disengaging from the world because of ill will towards the pleasures of the world. It

is letting go of the pleasures of the world for something which is more pleasurable, more refined. The great bliss of the mind in deep meditation, the shear pleasure of stillness, is something to be experienced, something to be fully appreciated. The Buddha said the whole purpose of practice is to abandon those intoxicants which blind you to the pleasure of peace and stop you experiencing the pleasures of silence and stillness.

Intoxication is always wanting to go back to get another hit of the drug of the five-sense worlds, wanting to see more things, experience more things, have more relationships, more pleasure. That intoxication with the world is something which is a great problem for humanity, because it stops you appreciating something far more profound. The whole purpose of this threefold practice is to stop that intoxication. It also gives a good explanation for the precept to abandon alcohol, which is why monks don't go partying or have a glass of champagne at the ordination ceremony to celebrate. Instead of celebrating with intoxicants we celebrate with mindfulness.

Intoxicants tend to mess up one's awareness and dull the mind. Pleasures lead to dullness. Once one realizes that, instead of intoxicating the mind and having dullness afterwards – that lack of clarity, almost ill will, the sense of being upset – we develop the even mindedness that can still be happy in a different sense, a more stable sense. The Buddha said mindfulness is for overcoming intoxications, but not just the intoxication for sensory pleasure, but even the intoxication with 'self'. There are different types of *majja*, or intoxication, which is a word that is sometimes translated as pride, just like, pride in youth, pride in health and pride in being alive. For those of you who are not yet old and have the intoxication of youth, you think you'll have this energy for ever. But as soon as you start aging the energy starts to disappear, you just can't lift that axe as high as you did before. You can't drive it into the wood as deeply as you could before. The body just will not do what you tell it.

That's a great insight and a great shock for some people who are attached to their body. You see how in later life the body lets you down. Instead of being something that you can tell what to do, like an instrument of your will, it just goes its own way; it just will not do things. That's a powerful thing to see for oneself in old age. One doesn't really believe that until one experiences it. I can appreciate that for old people

the body is a prison and it's a very hard prison. It just will not do what you tell it, instead it tells you what to do. When the body wants to sleep, it just sleeps. When it wants to hurt, it just hurts, and you can't do anything about it. The pride of the intoxication of youth is something to be wary of.

The intoxication of health is similar to the intoxication of youth. To think that one is so clever and smart for being healthy, and therefore somehow superior. "If people are ill it's their own fault." Some people in our society think like that. But we know that health, and ill health are a pair and both are our inheritance. When we look upon our inheritance, which is given to us by our parents, what they have really given to us is this body which is going to age, get sick and eventually die. We get all the fun and the pleasures at the beginning and we pay for it at the end. It's not a very good deal!

There is also the intoxication of 'being', the intoxication of life. People love to 'be', but why? If we look at life and the suffering in life, we often think it is other people's fault that they suffer. In the same way we think it's their fault that they get ill. Suffering is as natural to life as illness is; it's no one's fault it just comes. We are genetically disposed to suffering and there is no way you can manipulate those genes to avoid that suffering. It's just 'par for the course', it has to happen. That is why the Buddha said, "Separation from what you want is suffering, and being with what you don't want is suffering". Half of life is being with what you don't want, you can't really avoid it. But the Buddha said that the 'practice' is for the overcoming of the intoxications and pride, and for the overcoming of thirst, or rather the disciplining of craving.

Using the metaphor of thirst, one can actually understand what the Buddha meant by craving; *taṇhā* is the Pāli word for thirst. It is as if one is dehydrated and always wanting to drink, one has to get a drink. That is craving, which is in fact physical suffering. We think our thirst can only be overcome once we've got the glass of water or cup of tea, but as soon as we've had one glass of water we need another one. That's the trouble with thirst; we think that we can overcome thirst by feeding it. There are some thirsts that you have to feed, but many thirsts can never be overcome by feeding them. The only way you overcome the problem is by disciplining the thirst. The more you give in to the mind, the more it wants. That's why you can

never overcome thirst in that way. The thirst I am talking about is for pleasure, and sexuality.

The Buddha once said there are three things you can never get enough of, never find fulfilment in, and never satiate yourself with. If I remember it correctly, one was sex, one was sleep, and the other was alcohol. With those three things we always want some more. This is why thirst can never be overcome, can never be ended. Look upon the way craving works, craving is suffering. As soon as craving manifests in the mind, as soon as we want something, there's a problem. There's business to be done. We have to aspire towards that thing, move towards that thing, try and grab that thing. If we succeed in gaining what we crave for, does the craving end for a little while? If we don't get it we're suffering. With craving, with these thirsts, as soon as we've got one thing we need something else. That's why these sorts of cravings for objects are unfaithful to you; as soon as you have it, it does not satisfy you. You want something else. Craving promises that as soon as we get this thing we'll be happy, but as soon as we get it we want something else, that's the way of craving, the way of thirst. You can understand what it's like to be thirsty, always being thirsty, and then to have a glass of water, and in a few moments you're thirsty again.

Buddhist cosmology has beings called the *petas*. These beings are ghosts, unfortunate beings who because of some past *kamma* in their previous lives have been born into that state. They have very small mouths and very big stomachs, which means they can never eat enough and they are always hungry and thirsty. You can imagine a huge stomach needs a lot of food to fill it up, but with such tiny mouths they can never get enough. Imagine that sort of suffering, never being able to get enough, always being hungry and thirsty. This is the state of human beings, always thirsty for sensory pleasures, for objects, always hungry for experiences, never truly being at peace. That thirst has to be disciplined through the practise of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, through virtuous practice leading to the ability to say no to the cravings in the mind. It's marvellous to see the practise of *sīla*, of restraint, practiced over many years. The result is that one doesn't need sex, and one doesn't need all the experiences that are on offer in the world. One is quite happy without these things.

It's such a release and a relief to know that one can be happy without all of these difficult and dangerous things that are so fraught with problems and suffering.

Someone told me some years ago that the root meaning of marriage comes from a Latin word meaning to take a gamble? I don't know if that is true, but marriage is truly a gamble. You never know really who you are marrying until maybe years after the ceremony. We can understand that sensuality is fraught with danger and by overcoming it and restraining ourselves we're freeing ourselves from that. We are actually disciplining thirst. If we don't drink the thirst disappears. A good example of this is sitting in meditation. When we first sit in meditation we try to get ourselves comfortable, but for people just beginning meditation it's difficult to get comfortable for very long. They have to sit this way or sit that way. They keep on fidgeting, always trying to find the most comfortable position. Usually they discover that if they keep following that thirst of the body for comfort, they will never find peace. Instead of all this moving whenever there's discomfort, they find if they say no to the demands of the body, discipline the demands of the body and just sit still, the aches and itches disappear by themselves. It seems that by not heeding them they fade away. Scratching just makes more itches.

This is what we mean by disciplining the thirst of the body. By not following the demands of the body they disappear. It's just like some person knocking on the door of your house. If you answer the door you may get into a long conversation, and now they know you are in, they will come again. If you don't answer the door they'll think there is no one there, and they will go away never to return. This is the way we discipline the body. When you sit there long enough and say no to all the itches and aches of the body, and simply don't move, the mind turns away from the feelings of the body. For the first time you can sit still and in comfort. It's a strange thing, but if we try and find comfort in the body by scratching, by moving, by putting another cushion underneath the bottom, we never find that comfort. Just leave the body alone. If we don't answer the calls of scratching and moving, the body just disappears and then there is peace. This is what we mean by disciplining the thirsts. By following and indulging them they just get worse. By saying no to them they disappear, and then we have comfort.

Use the triple practice of *sãla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* to destroy *ālaya*. My favourite translation of that Pāli word *ālaya* is roosting. Many people translate this word as attachment but that doesn't actually give the full meaning. The roost is a place where birds go at night time, up in the trees where they will be safe from predators. The Buddha said to destroy those roosts, those places where we sit and allow the defilements of the mind to grow and allow the world to grow around us. Destroy those attachments of the mind. The Buddha said that *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* will destroy these things. People often say they like to put down roots. But whenever they put down roots in the world those trees will always fall over whenever there is a storm, whenever there is a strong wind. The aim in Buddhism is not to have such roots but to be able to flow freely from one place to another – to be like a bird or a balloon in the sky, never tethered anywhere, with no weight, being able to float higher and higher, and having no roosting places. That is what we mean by freedom.

The person who is tied down lives in a prison. Many people make prisons of their lives; they make the bars of their prisons with the possessions they own. The prison guards are the relationships that confine and very often torture us. What the Buddha is saying is that we can let go of all of these prisons, all of these roosts, we can abandon them. We can free ourselves from confinement. People who meditate and who live monastic lives experience a great freedom, even though they sometimes stay in one place and don't move. People may say that's attachment. "Why are you fixed at being in this one place, in this one monastery?" And you say, "Because there is nothing to blow me away". That's real freedom, not external freedom but internal freedom, where there is nothing to blow you from one place to another. There are no defilements, there is no craving, and there are no roosting places. Birds go from one branch to another branch, always finding a different roosting place, but that's not what the Buddha meant by 'no roosts'. He meant having nowhere at all, and carrying on to destroy round of rebirth. So this practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, the factors of the Eightfold Path, not only destroys the roosts but also destroys rebirth.

Here in a deeper sense we can see the connection between the roosts and rebirth. Where the mind roosts there it grows, where the mind grows there it seeks rebirth. This is the powerful teaching of how the mind goes from one life to another according

to its predilections, its cravings, and its inclinations. *What you want, you will become*. This is a very powerful teaching because we can see that if we incline towards or any aspire for sensory pleasure, and we really work for it, eventually we will get there, if not in this life then in the next one. This is the problem for human beings. *We are actually creating the world*. We are creating our next lives by the roosts that we have. If we roost in pride, if we want to be someone, if we want to be respected, we will seek that in a future life as well. Our will creates these worlds for us and eventually, when we do gain that fame, we will realize just what an empty thing it is. All those people who have gained fame after working so hard for so long wonder why they took so much trouble. All those people who have experienced wealth after so much hard work wonder what it was all for. And even those people who experience relationships, the very highs of love and intimacy, afterwards, when it vanishes so quickly, they wonder why it was all just false promises. But we build up our hopes thinking that the next relationship will be okay.

When the Wind Dies Down

We are reborn to experience our hopes and our aspirations and eventually we create a world so we can experience those things. I remember Ajahn Jagaro's famous story from the Mullah Nasrudin. This little man was in front of a pot of chilli peppers with tears streaming down his face, his face was red from eating so much chilli. Someone came by and asked him, "Why are you eating all those hot chillies?", and he said "I'm looking for the sweet one". All the hot chillies, all the pain and suffering he was experiencing, one chilli after another chilli after another chilli, suffering and burning because he was looking for the sweet one. It's a very good metaphor for life. People get reborn because they are still looking for the sweet chilli. The way of *sīla samādhi* and *paññā* is letting go. Letting go through the practice of virtue and letting go further through the practice of *samādhi* we realize we don't need any more chillies. By letting go of the movement of the mind that seeks for more, there we find the sweetness. The sweetness is non-desire, non-craving, the sweetness of not moving outside ourselves, the sweetness of being still, peaceful, and free. Once you understand that sweetness you'll have cut off the very cause of rebirth – the craving, the hope, the desire – that's why this path actually ends rebirth. That thirst, that craving, the force behind rebirth, the 'house builder', has created our lives, one life

after another, hundreds, thousands of lifetimes, and that very force of movement, that craving, has been seen and cut off.

We know the cravings, but this practice ends all of those cravings that cause so many problems to the human mind. The monks who have just joined this monastery, who just ordained last Sunday, want to be peaceful. But during your monastic life many cravings will come up, many desires, many sensory aspirations, and all of those will torture you. What we aspire towards can only be achieved when we discipline and kill the cravings. Only through the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* do the cravings come to an end. Only then can we be free of these things. Craving is the great tyrant of human beings, animals and all other beings. It's a tyrant because it leads us by the nose. We are imprisoned; we are fettered by craving in this world of ours, in this present stage of the world.

Actually it's absolutely crazy that we take the ability to follow our cravings, to experience what we want as freedom. We think that is going to give us peace, give us freedom, but the more that we give free reign to craving, the more imprisoned we feel. *The more we indulge, the more we need to indulge*. We become prisoners, fettered by craving, fettered by attachment. We're fixed to these things and we cannot be free. If we only go to expensive restaurants we can never enjoy eating at home again. We can never get a 'McDonalds' or anything else that is simple. We always have to get the finest food. We're stuck with these things. We've been sucked in. This is why there is no freedom to be found by following craving. *Craving is the tyrant*. Craving is the very cruel prison guard who always tortures us. It's only when that craving is overcome that there is a sense of freedom. Instead of having to buy this, instead of having to go there, instead of having to indulge, we've got complete freedom. People sometimes go to the shops and say, "I just had to buy that!" Or, even though they are already happily married, they meet and are attracted to someone else. They have to hurt their partner and children, as they indulge their desires with someone else. Or we see food that we really like and even though it's bad for our health we have to eat it.

Why is it that our cravings are so strong that they kill us and create so much suffering in the world? It is only when there is the destruction of craving that there can be true freedom, true peace. The path of meditation is experiencing this for yourself. We

never get a peaceful meditation when we follow craving. The Five Hindrances are all about craving. Disciplining those five hindrances, overcoming them, letting them go means there's no craving in the mind, the mind is still. Craving is what moves the mind, what agitates the mind; it's the wind which makes the mind move. When the craving disappears, when the wind dies down, when it's absolutely still, then you are still and in that stillness is peace. In that peace is contentment. In that contentment is happiness. So, this is what we always aim and aspire for, the overcoming of that craving rather than indulging it.

From the overcoming of craving comes *virāga*, dispassion or fading away. I like both of those translations because they are both the meaning of *virāga*. *Virāga* leads to the fading away of things rather than the accumulating of things. It's nice just to fade away, to disappear, and to go off into nothingness, into emptiness. People in the world want to 'be', they want to exist. But Buddhist monks want to disappear, to fade away, and to cease. Where there is dispassion, there is a lack of passionate concern for the sensory world. You fade away from that world. You fade away from the kitchen, from the office, and you fade away into your huts. People don't see you, they don't hear you, and the good monks are those monks who are invisible in the community, the ones who are already fading away so much you hardly ever see them. That's what fading away means and the fading away eventually leads to true cessation.

Nirodha is one of the most beautiful of Pāli words; it is where all of the defilements come to a complete end, where craving comes to an end, where suffering comes to an end. *Nibbāna* – the flame has gone out, the fire is quelled. So, this is actually what we are saying in the ordination chant, how this three-fold practise of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* leads to all these beautiful things. The Buddha mentioned this because he wanted the old monks, the young monks, and the visitors to know the purpose of this monastic life, and where it's leading. One of the reasons people find it difficult to meditate is not because they haven't trained enough, or haven't been on enough retreats, it is because their practice of virtue isn't strong enough. That doesn't just mean keeping rules; it means there is too much craving, too much attachment to the world. So despite their best wishes they cannot keep the precepts, because there's too

much fire in their minds. This is where we all need to discipline ourselves with *sīla*, virtuous conduct. It's a strange thing but as people join a place like this monastery, as they become *anagārikas*, novices and monks, they find that just keeping the practice of the precepts, keeping good *sīla*, actually leads to a peaceful mind and it makes it easier to meditate. If you're keeping the precepts the mind is easier to concentrate, and so it's easier to let go. When you let go of one thing it's easier to let go of others. If you have a very well developed practice of *sīla* then *samādhi* is a great fruit, and a great benefit. If you've got really good *sīla*, then *samādhi* has the fruit of *jhānas*, the benefit of deep peace and the beautiful happiness of bliss.

When wisdom is founded on *samādhi* then that too is a great fruit, a great benefit. Wisdom not based on *samādhi*, not based upon *jhānas,* not based on those peaceful states of mind is not of great fruit, is not of great benefit. There are many wise people in this world but it is not a wisdom based on *samādhi.* There are many people in the universities, many smart people in business, many slick lawyers, but their *paññā*, their wisdom, because it's not based on *samādhi* is not of really great fruit, of great benefit, and more importantly is not certain to lead to happiness. If it is wisdom, deep understanding, based on those stages of *samādhi*, the Buddha said it is of great fruit, of great benefit. It's the wisdom that sees the path to ending suffering. Not following defilements, not following craving but disciplining, quelling, overcoming craving, and letting go of the source, this is what wisdom sees. Wisdom sees that craving is the cause for rebirth. Wisdom sees that the happiness one aspires towards is not found out there but lives inside. By letting go, by being still, by being at peace, by being content, not arguing with the world but just letting the world disappear, that sort of wisdom is based on *samādhi.*

It is said that a mind which is endowed with such wisdom, a mind which is founded on wisdom, overcomes the *āsavas*, the out-flowings of the mind. Namely, that tendency to go seeking for sensory pleasures, that tendency to go seeking for more existence, *bhavāsava*, and that tendency to go out based on delusion, the *avijjāsava.* These three things are abandoned in a mind that is founded on the wisdom which is founded on *samādhi*, which is founded on *sīla.* This is the powerful teaching of the Buddha telling us the way to overcome the defilements, to overcome these out-

flowings, telling us what makes us move, what makes us suffer, what takes us out of the inner happiness which is right there if we can only be content.

In Conclusion

So the Buddha said that each one of you, especially new monks, should practice assiduously, diligently, in the *adhisīla*, higher morality, *adhicitta*, concentration of mind, and *adhipaññā*, higher wisdom, which the Buddha has expounded. The *adhisīla* for monks are the Pātimokkha Precepts of the Vinaya together with sense restraint. The precepts which you have undertaken should never be seen as burdens, but they should be seen as vehicles which take you to freedom. The *adhicitta* training is the training in *jhānas* nothing less. And the *adhipaññā* is the wisdom which leads to the Enlightenment stages of Stream Winner, Once Returner, Non Returner and *Arahant*. Train yourselves in these things.

In the ordination procedure the Buddha not only taught the young monks to be simple and to watch out to not transgress these major rules of the Pātimokkha, but he also taught in a very beautiful and brief little sermon what monastic life is all about and how it leads to these beautiful happiness' and is and peace and freedom through the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. So make sure in your life as a monk, that you perfect the *sãla*, so that it is a solid, beautiful, sound foundation for *samādhi*, so that you can experience those blissful, beautiful, peaceful states of meditation. Make sure your wisdom is endowed with such experiences, so that the mind can overcome the defilements and be free, be an *Arahant*, be fully Enlightened in this world.

That should be your goal, your aspiration. Never forget that goal, that aspiration, and realize that goal, because that's the best thing that you can do for yourself, and for all other beings. Be an Enlightened being in this world that truly understands the Buddha, truly understands the Dhamma, and the power of an *Ariya* Saṅgha.

May you also join the *Ariya* Saṅgha later on in your life as a Buddhist monk.

4 LOOKING FOR THE SWEET CHILLI

Seeking Happiness in the World

1st March 2000

When we stay in a monastery to practice meditation, there's a great development of mindfulness which is drawn inside instead of being directed only to the world outside. So the ideal of monastic life includes that part of meditation which we call introspection. We get in touch with ourself and how we feel. We look at what makes us 'tick'. In particular, one starts to get in contact with the happiness and suffering of life. Coming to a monastery, one is very often seeking meaning, seeking wisdom, seeking happiness. And indeed, those quests for meaning, for wisdom, for happiness, are quests that we can see all over the world, amongst all people. Even the animals and beings of other realms are seeking happiness and meaning, and they are all running away from suffering. If one can give life a description, it is just the pursuit of happiness and the running away from pain and suffering.

However, although it is the case that people, and all beings in *saṃsāra* pursue that happiness, they very rarely find it. They seek pleasure and happiness but they just encounter suffering. This is the truth of life which I have come up against again and again, both in my own life and in the lives of the people I have met, spoken with, and spent time with.

We see that the whole world is just seeking happiness, seeking pleasure, and very rarely finding it. Very often the pleasure that people seek is an empty pleasure, a false pleasure. We're like sheep following each another. When all the sheep commonly agree that this is pleasure, every one goes along with it. No one ever calls the bluff, no one investigates what they feel.

Last night coming back from giving a Dhamma talk in Armadale, we had to stop to fill up with petrol at the service station. Next to us was a group of young men and women, maybe eighteen, nineteen or twenty years old, just 'cruising' as the saying goes. With nothing much to do in the evening they were just acting silly, like a bunch of idiots. Even though to me what they were talking about and how they were cavorting looked crazy and stupid, to them it was supposed to be 'cool'. They thought

it was happy and pleasurable. I think it was commonly agreed that that was the thing to do and so no one ever questioned whether what they were doing was happiness or not.

I recall that in my life I have always asked questions. Questioning and probing leads to real happiness. Questioning and investigating what this life is all about, questioning what pleasure is. Is this real pleasure? What's life all about anyway? This was something that led me to a monastic life, led me to meditation, and led me to where I am now. I've sometimes given talks where I've summed up the Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths into two truths: what is real happiness, and how do I get it. These are basically the two questions that propel human beings and animals through life. Finding out what happiness is and how we can secure it for ourselves.

Is This It?

The first thing I want to point out here is that you cannot always believe what other people say is happiness. I trod that path in my early years. People said that happiness was the rock bands and the drugs. They said happiness was sex and travel. I've been there and done that and to me it wasn't happiness at all. When we are doing all those things we are always just waiting for something to happen. Where is this happiness that people have promised? Is there something wrong with me? Am I not doing it right? There was some happiness, but just for a moment maybe. At the same time, there was a lot of tension from sex and relationships. Getting drunk was supposed to be so much fun and so great. And, talking about drugs, where was the real pleasure or meaning in that? But at least I had a mind that would question. I could look back afterwards and say: "This is stupid, this is meaningless. What am I doing this for? Where is it getting me? Am I really satisfying anything here? I'm just as lost afterwards as I was before".

Whenever I followed any of those pleasures in the world I found that there was always this craving, this hunger and thirst. There was a real fever beforehand and then emptiness afterwards. Is that it? So what! So, 'Is this it?' became a motto for my life in the lay world. Working all those years to get a degree and that's all it is. So what! What have I worked so hard all of these years for? Is this it? Getting into relationships – is that it? So what!

Listening to fine music. Is this it? So what! As soon as the music ended there was a hole and that hole was caused by craving, we just fill in something temporarily. It was like plastering over a crack in the wall, and as soon as the plaster dries the crack reappears. We aren't really solving the problem; we are just plastering it over temporarily. Certainly in my life, due to the search for pleasure, the search for meaning, the search for some sort of happiness, I started to really doubt and question the world out there. I questioned the lay life. At least I had some inspiration – I don't know where from – almost certainly from a past life, I suppose.

My inspiration was to try and look for that peace and happiness in the monastic life. When I saw Buddhist monks they seemed to be the most peaceful, the happiest and the most together people I'd ever seen. This shocked me a little, because the first thing I had read about Buddhism was the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, which is all about suffering. I couldn't understand why it was that these monks – I'm talking as a lay person, seeing my first monks – were talking about suffering and about giving up things, but they were the happiest people I had ever seen. Their smiles and their serenity was something that made me question my previous life style.

When those monks talked about suffering, they were always smiling and that really intrigued me. What was going on? Later on when I started to meditate, I had a powerful and deep experience of happiness, and that was even more intriguing. Why was it that in the search for happiness in the world, with its many different possibilities of happiness, the one which seemed to work the most, the one which seemed to be the most profound and long lasting, the one which seemed to be the most pure, was experienced in deep meditation during a retreat as a lay person?

That experience really made me consider what these Four Noble Truths were all about. Later when I became a monk I began to explain the Four Noble Truths in a slightly different way, still true to the original teachings but in a way that was a little bit easier for the lay community to understand. I started to talk about the Four Noble Truths as being the Noble Truth of happiness, the cause of happiness, the cessation of unhappiness and the way leading to happiness. I likened happiness with the end of suffering and the way leading to happiness with the Eightfold Path. It was true to the

original teachings, but it was just explained from a slightly different angle.

Certainly to me that made so much sense, because the years that I spent as a young monk, which are supposed to be years of hardship, were in fact years of great fulfilment, of great happiness and great peace. Even having to eat frogs in Thailand, I was a happy monk. I was peaceful and I enjoyed the life style. Now twenty five years on I can look back and understand why there was that enjoyment. That enjoyment was caused by letting go. It is the enjoyment that is caused by ending things. It is the happiness of peace. I found out, certainly for myself, that what we really know as true happiness, true contentment, has to be peacefulness; it is where things end. It is where movement is stilled and the problems are gone; this is true happiness. Knowing that, we find out that there is a path to true happiness. It's the path of stillness. It is the path of letting go. It is the path of giving up attachments, giving up craving.

Some people think that they can't give up attachments, and they can't give up craving. Basically it's not up to you, if you give it time, it has to happen. It's only a matter of giving causes and effects the time to work. It's no more possible than a flower deciding not to bloom, or deciding when it will bloom. The flower just blooms according to its season and that's all there is to it. In the same way a person starts to engage in the path of letting go, of going against craving and going against attachments. When we are on a happy path, it's always a sign that we're beginning to understanding some Dhamma, some teachings, some truths. It's a sign that we are putting that understanding into practice because it's giving us greater happiness, greater peace, greater contentment.

Somewhere in this world, somewhere in this life, you're going to have to find some contentment. Otherwise you're going to be running around as if you are being chased by a swarm of bees that are stinging you. Never being able to escape the pressure of suffering in life, one has to find some place where there's contentment, where there's peace, where there's freedom from the struggle. Sometimes when we talk about freedom people don't understand what that word means. It's not freedom to follow defilements, craving and attachments. That's what people in the world call freedom, the freedom to cruise around, get drunk and to 'do drugs' or whatever. That sort of

freedom is not freedom at all because it is just giving in to coarse desires which never lead to anything fulfilling, useful or happy. People have seen that in the world and they've seen that in others. Surely they should be able to see that in themselves. Those things only lead to more suffering, more entanglement, and more problems.

Real freedom is the freedom to say no. The freedom to say no to the forces in the mind that stop one being peaceful, the forces in the mind that keep blowing you from place to place, from person to person. Instead of being blown around in this world there has to come a time, there has to be a place, there has to be a spot, where one stands still like a mountain. Although the wind blows, you don't move. The wind can blow and blow, but you don't move and eventually the wind gives up. That symbol of a mountain is the symbol of an *Arahant* who has let go of moving according to the cravings and the defilements. We have to decide to stand still, just to be here, and not move from the present moment.

Views and Ideas

People sometimes have the idea that happiness and pleasure is achieved by just following the idiocy of the world. What people in the world say is happiness, the Enlightened ones say is suffering. What the Enlightened ones say is happiness, the world says is suffering. What is it that people in the word say is happiness? If you read the magazines or the newspapers you can see that people say happiness is the new movie, the new relationship, going here, going there, and having children and so on. You haven't lived until you've been up the Amazon! – or whatever people may say is happiness in the world. I've explored many places and experienced many things in my life, and somehow they all seem so empty and meaningless. I can't imagine why people still run after those things, why they haven't seen the suffering and the pain of travel, of sex, and of relationships.

In Buddhism there is the simile of the horse. There was a wise horse, a smart horse, a heedless horse, a stupid horse and a very, very stupid horse, and there is also the trainer with a whip. The wise horse doesn't even need to see the whip: the trainer tells him to do something, and the horse does it straight away. The horse knows that is in its best interest. That's the path to happiness. Sometimes the trainer has to pick up the whip and let the shadow of it fall on the horse. The shadow of the whip falls

on the horse and the smart horse knows, "I'd better do the right thing or it's going to hurt." The next horse, being heedless, has to be tapped lightly. Just a little bit of suffering, just a tap, and it's enough for the horse to know what's in its interest, what the path to happiness is. The next horse is stupid and the trainer has to whack it once, 'Ow!' It hurts once, and when it hurts once, that's enough; the horse knows which way to go. Of course the very, very stupid horse is the horse that has to be hit again and again, 'Ow! Ow! Ow!' It still keeps doing the same stupid things, 'Ow! Ow! Ow!' The foolish horse wonders what's going on, but it's amazing how many people, even in a monastery, fall into that last category.

Haven't you suffered enough already? What are you doing this for? It's easy to be happy, just stop doing anything, be peaceful and go against the stream. Sometimes its just habit that holds us back. The horse is so set in its ways, especially in its ways of thinking, that it's hard to change. The horse thinks that next time the whip won't hit him or he will be able to escape. Next time he will be able to out-smart the trainer, but of course, 'Ow! Ow! Ow!' It happens again!

The Mullah Nasrudin was eating a bunch of chillies, eating one after the other, until his face was red, his eyes were streaming, and his nose was running. That is what happens when you eat too many hot chillies. He was still munching those chillies when someone came up and asked him, "Why are you eating so many hot chillies?" Mullah Nasrudin said "I'm looking for the sweet one." This is what people do in life, whether it's a relationship, a place, or a job – even some monks looking for a monastery – they're still looking for the sweet one. Of course, there is no sweet one. Chillies are chillies, they are all hot, and it's a waste of time to keep eating, eating, looking for the sweet one in life.

This is something that you have to experience for yourself. If you're smart you don't need to be hit many times. But it's more than just realizing suffering; it's also realizing the opposite of suffering, which is recognizing happiness. If one just focuses on the suffering of life, that is not enough of an incentive for people to do what's necessary to find liberation from suffering. We often get used to our suffering, we take it for granted and we think that's all there is. We become accepting of the suffering in the world.

We have a story in Buddhism of the worm in a pile of dung. Being so attached to that pile of dung, the worm thinks it's in heaven. This is the trouble with people and suffering: they have some suffering and they get used to it. They then think that suffering is heaven.

Coming to a place like this – to the monastic life – we have an opportunity to see something else, something deeper, something more. We have the opportunity to see real happiness. Not some happiness which is promised when you die, not some happiness which is somehow in a distant future. "If you make good *kamma*, then you'll be happy. Just believe me and then you'll be okay." The happiness that you can experience in monastic life is the happiness, which is *sandiṭṭhika*, available in this very life. It's right in this moment if you care to look at it. One of the things that I find in my meditation is that in any moment we can get to that peace. All we need to do is flick the right switch in our mind. It's a momentary attainment. All we need to do is find that 'letting go' switch. Once we know that switch, that movement of the mind, whether it's our meditation or when we're eating our meal, or whatever else we may be doing, it becomes so easy, so peaceful. That is because we've found the Third Noble Truth, the letting go of suffering.

Once we get to that point it's so easy to repeat it and just let go. It's the simplest thing to do once we know how to do it. It's like riding a bike, once we've learned to ride a bike it's the simplest thing in the world. We don't need to think about it. When we first get onto a bike we wobble all over the place. I think many of you can understand, or a least appreciate, what I am saying. The path to real happiness, the path to the ending of suffering is the ability just to open up, to let go and be free from craving. The whole monastery here is shouting out to us to let go and renounce. That's the meaning of this monastery.

Oh What Bliss!

Last night, I was talking to the lay people in Armadale about the conception of emptiness. Emptiness is another word for letting go. If we let go of things we are left with this beautiful, awesome emptiness. Because emptiness is something that is so profound, people often don't realize what it is, so they miss it. They can't see it.

People have got a blind spot to emptiness. That's why in the Cūlasuññata Sutta (MN 121) the Buddha explains the way to develop the perception to recognize what the mind is free from. Recognize that in the monastery this evening we are free from so many burdens. We're free from television, free from relationships. We're free from bills. We're free from having to go to work. We're free from all the bitterness that can so easily oppress us in life.

In one particular *Sutta* the Buddha encouraged the monks to bring up the perception of what we're free from, because that gives us a sense of happiness, the happiness born of freedom. "*Aho sukhaṃ! Aho sukhaṃ! Aho sukhaṃ!"* a monk said this as he sat under a tree. He was an ex-king, and the other monks thought he was remembering his life as a king, with all the sensory pleasures he then had. When they asked him afterwards if that was the case, he said, "No, no", I was saying "*Aho sukhaṃ!* Oh what bliss! Oh what bliss!" because now I am free from all of that, free from the concerns, the worries and the bitterness of being a king. "Oh what happiness, oh what bliss!" This is what I encourage you to do in your meditation; remember what you've left behind. "Oh what bliss, oh what bliss, to be free of the streets!" "Oh what bliss, oh what bliss, to be free of the work place!" "Oh what bliss, to be free from the pressures of relationships!" "Oh what bliss, oh what bliss, to be free from concerns about money, and acquiring possessions!"

In a monastery such as this you are free from so many things. Even if you're just here for a few hours or days you're free from many burdens, and the mind dwells upon the perception of what you've let go. This is dwelling on the Third Noble Truth. This is dwelling on cessation, ending and emptiness. This is dwelling on *Nibbāna* itself or, at least, it is leaning in that direction. When you cultivate the perception of the Third Noble Truth in this way, it points out to you what this happiness in monastic life really is. If we forget that perception of emptiness, we just don't see it and we think there is nothing there.

There is a big difference between nothing and emptiness. Nothing is something you can't see, emptiness is something you can really appreciate. Once we start to develop these sorts of perceptions we say: "Hey, this is real happiness! This is real peace!

This is real contentment! This is really fulfilling!" We are noticing the happiness of things ending, not the happiness of things beginning. We're noticing the happiness of having nothing to do, rather than looking for something to do. We're noticing the happiness of space rather than the happiness of things. As we begin to focus on the perceptions of emptiness, we're finding out what real happiness is. The more we empty out, the more happiness we feel. We can empty our mind of thought and see how peaceful, wonderful and blissful it is if our mind is not obsessed or tyrannized by this one thing, which we call thinking.

The Inner Commentator

People sometimes play really heavy and oppressive music in their cars. If it's not that sort of music, it's some other music. In the shopping centres, in the airports or wherever else we go, we hear music. At our City Centre, I often just want to sit quietly, but people come to me and want advice on their problems. There is so much noise in the world! It's so nice in the evenings, when everyone has left, to go back to my room and be quiet again, "Oh what bliss!" That noise outside, people asking questions, asking you to do things, making arrangements, that's the same sort of noise as the noise we hear in our mind. It's the 'inner commentator' telling us what to do, telling us to go this way, or that way. That inner commentator telling us we are not good enough, we're this way, or we're that way. When that noise stops it's marvellous. We're left with just the emptiness, the bliss of no speech, of no thinking; of no one telling us what to do.

I have always rebelled against people telling me what to do. That's why I'm not a very authoritarian abbot. I don't really go around telling everyone what to do, not all the time anyway. Because my mind is rebellious, I noticed that in my mind there was always someone telling me what to do. 'Come on meditate.' 'Meditate longer.' 'Get up early.' 'Come on don't sleep in so much.' 'Come on get your mind together.' 'Give better talks.' 'Don't eat so much.' 'Be a better example to the younger monks.' 'Rah, rah, rah, rah.' That was just like being told what to do again. Sometimes that would almost drive me crazy.

When we listen to that, it's very easy to get depressed. That inner commentator can be the cause of depression. Because that inner commentator is always – at least for

me – so fault finding. We really have to watch out for that inner commentator, not just in monastic life, but also in lay life, in all life, because that's someone we just cannot trust. In monastic life at least we have another perspective. We have other people encouraging us to look at that inner commentator with a sense of separation and with mindfulness. Just listen to the rubbish the inner commentator keeps on telling you, again and again. It's only when we believe in that inner commentator that we get into trouble. That inner thought cannot be trusted. It's not the truth, it's not accurate.

I remember once, on a meditation path in a monastery in Thailand. I was watching my thoughts and getting some separation from them. As I watched the thoughts without getting too involved in them, they appeared to me to be so stupid, because I could trace how every thought that came up was conditioned. They were all conditioned; I was just repeating what I had been taught in the past. There wasn't even one original thought. The thoughts weren't really coming from me. I could see the same words coming from my own biological father, or from people who had impressed me. I was just repeating the words like a parrot. When we see that with mindfulness, the inner conversation is seen for what it is, just *the echoes of the past*. We believe in something that has no substance, something that isn't real and which has no truth to it. I just couldn't believe in it anymore and then a wonderful thing happened. When I didn't believe in the thinking, it just stopped and I had one of my most beautiful meditations.

Before that insight I had believed all of my thoughts. I'd argue with my friends but I'd never argue with myself. I'd never doubted any thought that came up into my mind; I'd always take it as absolute truth. If I didn't like something, if that's what the thought was, then I didn't like it and that for me was the truth. Afterwards, because I completely pulled the rug out from beneath my own thinking, I wouldn't easily believe what other people said. I'd be very questioning about what I read in books, I was always challenging it. On the meditation path when we are challenging thought itself, we realize how much of a bubble it is. I pricked the bubble, it went 'pop', and there was nothing left. That's what thinking is! It is thinking that blows you from place to place. It's thinking that creates all the trouble if you believe in it. Watch those thoughts, reflect upon them, and see them from a distance as an observer.

Watch this inner conversation going backwards and forwards with a sense of detachment. The more we watch it with detachment, with mindfulness, the more we will loosen our belief in the accuracy of our thoughts. But if we can't believe in what we think, what can we believe in? The answer is: we can believe in the silence, in that emptiness. That emptiness is far more truthful, far more real than the thinking.

Thinking is just a commentary. I sometimes criticize the commentaries of the Buddhist teachings. The Buddha's teachings are much more real than the commentaries. Commentaries are just people's ideas about what happened, in the same way as the commentary we have about our experiences. That inner conversation is not accurate, it's just a thought that comes up and goes away. It comes conditioned according to the moods of our mind. If we're upset we have rotten thoughts, if we are in a great mood we have nice thoughts. Which thoughts are real? Neither of them, they're all just coloured and bent by conditions. That's why now, when we see that, we don't believe in any of those thoughts. When I want to leave, I don't believe in it; when I want to stay, I don't believe in it. When I'm annoyed because a monk did something really unskilful – 'He shouldn't have done that, he should have known better' – I don't believe in that. When a monk has been really, really, great and done wonderful, marvellous things, I don't believe in that. Instead I believe in the silence.

The Fabric of Reality

If I have faith in anything, it's in silence. When I believe in that silence, it's an experience that is real. It's also an experience which gives much more happiness. It gives perspective to all these thoughts. It puts the thoughts in their proper place. It's not that the thoughts are not real; it's just that the thoughts are disturbers of the silence. Once you let the thoughts go the silence returns. The silence is more like the fabric of reality. That's why in a monastery, if you listen closely enough, you can hear that silence around you and you can hear the silence in your mind.

Once we can hear that silence of the mind and touch that emptiness, there is something about it that we know is real, even before we start thinking this is meaningful, this is peaceful, this is happiness. After a while we become a connoisseur of that peacefulness and we value it. We look upon it as a great jewel, a great gem

that is very valuable. This world doesn't value silence at all, it doesn't value emptiness. Wherever there is nothing people want to put something in. When there is quietness they want to speak. When there is a space they want to fill it up. That's craving; that's foolishness; that's a lack of confidence; it's fear. We think because of fear. We move because of fear. We crave because of fear. It takes courage just to let go.

Because you've come to a monastery, there is something inside each of you, which has sensed that in silence, in letting go, there is peace. Each of you has already lived enough years to have been disappointed many, many times in the search for happiness. But once you start to turn to silence and to emptiness, you will remember it and value it. That silence, that emptiness, begins to be noticed in so many places. You notice the emptiness in your room; that's why the best monks are the monks with the fewest possessions. You notice it in the emptiness of your daily schedule with fewer duties. You notice it in the emptiness of your mind.

In other words, fewer thoughts are needed. We notice that in the emptiness of our movements. We tend to stay still more, rather than always coming and going. We're letting go, we're simplifying. The more things we have, the more things we do. The more places we go, the more complicated we make our life style. Those of you who are travelling will know how complicated it is to travel, the family arrangements and how it involves so many other people. Sometimes we think what are we travelling for? Wherever I go, there I am. What is the point! I sometimes look at that, and if it's not for someone else's benefit, I can't see the point in travelling for myself. I might as well just stay here, because whatever is over there is also over here. That emptiness, that silence, that space, you can see it anywhere. Especially the silence, the space between our ears, it's the emptiness of the mind.

It is strange that when some people become quiet in their meditation, even just for a moment, they feel so challenged by that silence that they disturb it. I think many people actually leave a monastery, because they can't stand the silence. They're afraid of it. They want to fill it up with activity or with movement. There's a lot of truth to that in a very deep sense. We can see that sometimes in meditation, when things start to get still, 'Wow!' that's a bit much. But after a while, a person in

monastic life does respect the silence, does value the silence, and when anyone respects and values these things, they meet them more and more.

I know that some monks would like to see *devas*. If you believe in *devas*, perhaps they might come and see you. It's much more important to be able to believe in the silence, so that the silence can come and meet you. That silence is the ending of things, the quietness of the mind. When there is silence in the mind, there's no thinking. When there is no thinking how can there be craving? How can there be the wanting to come this way, or go that way? How can there be wanting anything? How can there be dissatisfaction or elation in the ending of thought?

Of course this is a temporary ending to the movements in the mind. But by actually emptying your mind of things you find that allows greater spaciousness, greater freedom. In the same way, when you empty your hut of things, there's more freedom in that hut to move around. When you empty your mind of things there is more freedom to move around and there's more peace, more happiness. So the aim of the meditation should be to abandon things. The aim is getting rid of things, not accumulating more. The aim of meditation should be stillness, not to keep on moving. There has to come a time when you stand your ground and let go, wherever that place is.

The only thing I remember from Zen Buddhism is a question that a monk asked his pupil. The pupil had just returned to the main monastery after spending a long time on solitary retreat. The monk punched him – that's what Zen monks used to do – and asked the pupil, "When is there going to be an end to all this coming and going?" I always remember that statement, because I used to ask myself, 'When is there going to be an end to all this coming and going', and of course the answer is now.

Now has to be the ending of coming and going. Just let go of all that movement of the mind. It's only when we see the feeling of peacefulness, the feeling of emptiness, as a powerful, sublime, deep happiness that we start to appreciate what makes monastic life tick. Monastic life is all about the happiness of that silence and the happiness of peace. The more we touch it, the more we appreciate it, the more we understand it. We also understand that this is the way to the highest happiness.

Contentment is the highest happiness.

All craving is reaching out trying to achieve happiness. "If I can just get this one more thing, then I'll be happy. If I can just get that car, then I'll be happy. If I can just get that beautiful girl, then I'll be happy. If I can just get my sickness healed, then I'll be happy. If I can just get my meditation correct, then I'll be happy." It's always craving and it's always happiness in the future. It's the same thing that motivates some people to just keep going to church or to the temple, to ensure they'll go to heaven. It's just another form of craving that's all.

These cravings can never lead to the end of suffering. Craving leads to more suffering. We can see that very easily. Craving – wanting something more, something in the future – can only lead to more suffering and more unhappiness. We think that all we need is to satisfy just one more craving, "I'll just get this one more thing, and then I'll let go" – but of course it never works that way. There is always one more thing afterwards: another one more thing and one more thing, until you die, and after death, one more thing. There has to be a stopping, a letting go now, a time to say 'no more craving'. What I've got now is enough, my mind is good enough and my body is good enough. It doesn't matter how old and sick it is, my body is good enough.

One of Ajahn Chah's meditations was the 'good enough' meditation. This food is good enough; this monastery is good enough; this talk is good enough. Once you have that good enough perception, craving stops. If this is good enough what do I want to change it for? What do I want to move for? Why do I want to get anything else? 'Good enough' is a cause for contentment. You can try that in your meditation to see if it works. It's amazing, if we do that, really do it, one hundred percent, not ninety nine percent but one hundred percent good enough, we find that the mind calms down, becomes still, becomes concentrated and peaceful. *Pītisukha* comes up, the *nimmittas* come up, and *jhānas* occur. This happens simply because you stop that which causes movement in the mind. Not just craving, but the cause of craving; the delusion that there is something more out there in the future, in the next moment.

The thought that 'this is not enough' is a delusion. It's craving. We know it's

delusion because it has kept us going for so many lifetimes. It's kept us going for the last twenty-four hours. We're always doing something or else we want something more, we're never standing still. If we realize that this is good enough and we trust in that one hundred percent, we discover that this really is good enough, and we have as much as we'll ever need. We stop wanting more. We stop craving. When we stop craving, we stop thinking and we stop moving. When we stop moving, we're in the present moment, we're silent. The longer we keep that stillness the more chance contentment has to build up. We realize that all the jewels and wealth in the world are right here. All the bliss and happiness we could ever want are right in this moment, and we may even start crying with happiness. We realize we had it all along, but we always throw away the jewel of *Nibbāna* for something else.

We always want something else. But if we just stop, be empty and be still, we will find out that contentment is happiness. The more contentment we have the more happiness we build up. Happiness upon happiness upon happiness! If you do it this way, I'll guarantee that there is so much happiness you won't know how you will be able to take anymore. You get more bliss, more sheer pleasure out of meditation than you do from anything else. That's my experience anyway. We get that, just by stopping, by letting go.

We're not only experiencing pleasure for pleasure's sake. Even as monks we are permitted this pleasure, it's allowable, it's not dangerous. That needs to be said because sometimes people are afraid of that pleasure. They think there must be something wrong with the bliss of *jhāna*. It's really strange how some people are afraid of the beautiful pleasures, the good pleasures. But they are not afraid of the crazy pleasures, the pleasures of sex, the pleasures of food, the pleasures of conversation and the pleasures of craving. People are not afraid of those pleasures, but they are afraid of the really wholesome pleasures. What foolishness!

The pleasures of deep meditation, stillness, letting go, giving up, renouncing; stopping, these are all words referring to the same thing: emptying – going to that emptiness, just fathering that emptiness, and seeing it grow like a beautiful lotus flower. The most beautiful lotus flower we have ever seen in the mind's eye is just opening and opening. We're going to see why. We are going to have the insight and

the wisdom of the Four Noble Truths. We will know what suffering is, what *dukkha* is, not as an intellectual theory, but as an experience. We've been there; we've felt it and we've been burnt up with craving. We've reached out and blown the bliss, and we know that is suffering. We know the suffering of being lost in the illusion of the world, of always having to go backwards and forwards, seeking this and seeking that, trying to build our happiness on other people, on other things, and seeing that all those other things and people are completely unreliable. We cannot depend upon them, they let us down. Our false scaffolding of happiness crashes and we crash and injure ourselves with it.

We've been there and done that so many times. *There is happiness in the world and that happiness is inside of us*. We don't have to go anywhere else to find it. We have to go inside ourselves. We won't find happiness by stepping out into the world or by stepping out to Thailand, or Sri Lanka, or wherever else we want to go. We will only find happiness and liberation inside this body and mind. Wherever we happen to be on this planet that is the only place we can find happiness. We carry it around with us, so what is the need to go elsewhere, except inward? Stop and see that suffering, and know that suffering. How many more years do we have to follow suffering and be a victim of suffering? Instead distrust suffering, distrust craving, distrust thinking; just stop for a few moments and look.

Look into this present moment. Look at what happens when we don't follow craving, when we really let go. Look at what happens when we follow instead the Third Noble Truth: *paṭinissagga*, abandoning, *cāga*, giving up, *mutti*, freeing. Free from attachment, *anālaya*, not providing a roosting place for this craving, being completely empty of any possibility of a perch for craving to hold on to. No thought, no wanting; completely content in this moment. If craving comes in, know it, and just stay still. If any thought comes in, be like people who are quiet in a theatre or in a concert hall, just maintain that peace. We can create that peace within our mind, it's not just an experience of pleasure it's the manifestation of the Dhamma. It is the Four Noble Truths in action. We haven't followed craving, we've let go, we've given up, and 'Wow!'

This is the opposite of suffering. This is freedom, *vimutti*. This is happiness; the best happiness we've ever had. This happiness is what keeps me going as a monk, the serenity, the peace, the letting go. That freedom is what is behind the smile and the peace of all the great mystics, and the great *Arahants* in the world. It's the serenity, the peace, and the understanding of what happiness is. That's the Dhamma being taught to you. It is insight, *vipassanā*, seeing the Buddha's teaching. It's seeing the teaching that the Buddha saw under the Bodhi tree. That, which is the truth of happiness and suffering, you're discovering it for yourself in your letting go. If you repeat that experience as much as you can, you'll be undermining the illusion which keeps you running backwards and forwards, both in this world and between worlds.

We're finally finding out what real happiness is and we're ending suffering. This is something that we can experience for ourselves, that we can appreciate for ourselves. I don't care whether we are going anywhere tomorrow or tonight! We can experience this 'letting go'. Look at the mind! Detach from the mind! See what you're doing and stop 'messing around'. How much longer do you want to be blown around in this way? Isn't it time now for you to be free, to know real peace, real happiness?

Isn't it time to be able to see *Nibbāna* for yourself?

5 DETACHMENT

5th April 2000

When we discuss the teachings of Buddhism we talk a lot about attachments. This is a word that is often misunderstood and misused by many Buddhists. If we don't understand what the word means we can get into a lot of trouble and experience confusion. The opposite of attachment is easier to understand it is called 'letting go'. We always know when letting go is happening because things disappear. We don't know when attachment happens because most of the time we can't see it. The nature of delusion, the core problem of human beings, is to blind us. Delusion or illusion if you like, is called *avijjā* in Pāli and that delusion and lack of enlightenment is something that we can't see. It's a blind spot inside us, but we don't know we are blind!

The Road to Suffering

The big problem of *avijjā* or delusion is that a person who is deluded always thinks they are right. That is the reason there are so many different ideas and opinions in this world. We can't see that that is not the correct way to look at things. However, there is one way that we can find out what delusion is. Delusion is that which leads to suffering. It's that which leads to problems and difficulties. Wisdom is that which leads to the end of suffering and difficulties. In the same way, attachment – which is the result of delusion – is that which causes suffering, pain and difficulty in our lives. It's detachment and letting go that frees us and leads to us to happiness, peace and contentment. This is the best way to understand the meaning of these terms. If whatever is happening in our life is causing suffering or discomfort, it's because of a lack of contentment; contentment, which is there for the taking. It means that we're not seeing something. We need to have at least enough wisdom and faith to challenge ourselves.

So often, it's the sense of self, the sense of ego, the sense of pride born of that ego; which feeds the delusion, 'I can't be wrong, I'm right.' 'No one else understands, only me.' It's one's 'self' that feeds the attachments. 'This is right.' 'This is what I want to do.' 'This is the correct way.' 'This is the right idea.' This delusion is attachment to views. So often we just can't see that, because we think we have the

right view. It's very hard for a human being to know they are wrong, in fact no one thinks they are wrong. We all think we are right. That's the problem! Even though, in a monastery, there can be thirty different people, everyone thinks they know the Dhamma. But everyone can't know the Dhamma if they've all got different ideas.

This is where one needs a bit of humility, a bit of faith or confidence in the teachings of the Buddha. Fortunately the teachings of the Buddha are very clear. They have been well preserved and are reasonably well translated. So we can actually look at those teachings for ourselves. But even here, we've got to be very careful because of the way delusion works. We can read into some of those teachings things that aren't even there in the translations. For example, attachment! We shouldn't be attached. We shouldn't even be attached to meditation. We shouldn't be attached to being a monk. We shouldn't be attached to anything. We shouldn't be attached to eating or not eating. We shouldn't even be attached to sleeping. So if that's the case, don't sleep tonight. This gets ridiculous and stupid, doesn't it? However, people can read into it whatever they wish. Some lay Buddhists even say they shouldn't be attached to the precepts. But they don't say they shouldn't be attached to their wives and children, to their coffee or whatever else it is that serves their sensory gratification. They are just using attachment to fulfil their sensory desires and to criticise others who challenge them. They are just using their sensory desires in an unfair way grounded in delusion and aimed to protect their comfort, aimed to protect the cravings and attachments that are binding them to this world of *saṃsāra.*

If you want to check out these teachings of the Buddha, you need to have intellectual honesty, or at least a sense of integrity, to be able to see these teachings for what they are. You have to see the whole of the teachings – not just some parts – without adding anything to them or taking anything away. Don't just choose some very obscure passages that support your ideas. Don't read so much into one or two hard to translate obscure passages and ignore the very great mass of very clear and very precise, repeated teachings, which you find throughout the Buddhist Scriptures. At least that much should give you a sense of understanding what the Buddha actually taught. For those of you who have gone so far as to become monks, you should have confidence and faith in what the Buddha taught, and you should have some confidence and faith in those monks who have been practising for much longer than

you. That's the reason we have *nissaya*, support, or depending upon another. That's so important in the practice, because we cannot just depend upon ourselves.

Personal Views

We cannot become Enlightened all by ourselves. Only a Buddha can do that. For that reason we need the help of other people. We can see how this is so, because everyone has their own ideas and we cling to those ideas tenaciously. We argue with the teacher. We even argue with the Buddha, because everyone else is wrong except us. 'I'm the only one who really understands!' It's important to understand that unless you've had an experience of Enlightenment, unless you are a Stream Winner; unless you are an *Ariya*, you should always take it as a given that you are still deluded. If one is a *puthujjana*, an ordinary person, then *avijjā* is still there and one hasn't yet seen the Dhamma. There is still something missing. So, one should have the humility to trust the teachings of the Buddha, the real Dhamma. That's the only way we can have a hope of overcoming the attachments to our own personal views.

That attachment to one's own personal views is probably one of the strongest, fiercest, most tenacious, and most *dukkha* producing of all the attachments. Attachment to views stops one from even getting on the path leading to the ending of suffering. People in this world are often so convinced of their own views that they never challenge them at all. This creates so much suffering for themselves and others! Sometimes we can see exactly what people are doing. As the Buddha said in a simile that he gave, we see them acting like a man walking on a path leading into a pit of burning coals. If he keeps on walking in that direction you know he will end up in the blazing pit of coals, causing suffering or even death. You can tell him not to go in that direction, to go in another direction instead, but he just won't listen. He won't change his view that this is the right way to go. I know this is a big problem with human beings. It's caused either through a lack of wisdom or a lack of faith.

Wisdom and faith are two of the five *indriyas*, spiritual qualities that are also spiritual powers. Sometimes they are translated as controlling faculties because they are so important on the path to Enlightenment. The five *indriyas* are: faith, energy, mindfulness, *samādhi* and wisdom. If one hasn't enough of these qualities one will

always be on the wrong path, and one won't be even getting close to *Nibbāna*. One won't even be getting close to the door through which these great insight experiences can be found. It is going in the wrong direction altogether! If one hasn't got wisdom one needs to have a lot of faith. The trouble is most people already think they've got lots of wisdom, and that leads them to think they don't need faith. They 'think' and that's the problem.

One knows one has wisdom if the path is developing. One needs not just the ability to keep virtuous conduct, the ability to restrain the mind, and the ability to calm the mind, but also the ability to eradicate the five hindrances, the ability to get into a *jhāna*, and the ability to be equanimous and have clear insights coming up throughout the day. All of these things are signs that your wisdom is developing and the path is manifesting. If those things aren't happening it means our wisdom isn't strong enough, '*natthi jhānam apaññassa*, *paññā natthi ajhāyato*' (Dhp 372), '*there is no jhāna in one who lacks wisdom, nor is there wisdom in one who lacks jhāna*'. These two depend upon each other. So don't think that you are wise if you can't get into deep meditation.

There is no wisdom without *jhāna*. That humbles one. It humbles one to say, "Look, there are things in here that I just don't understand, that I just don't see. Maybe I have to trust someone else. Maybe I really can trust the teacher and have faith in him. At the very least I can trust what the Buddha said in the *suttas*". The clear teachings that we see in the *suttas* show us what we should be doing to overcome our attachments. The attachments that we have are the attachments to our views, attachments to the sensory world of the five senses, attachments to our business or to our projects, attachments to our thoughts and attachments to our emotions. All these attachments have to be let go of and abandoned.

Uncovering the Attachments

The practise of abandoning the attachments is what we do when we sit or walk in meditation, and also when we do anything else in this monastery. My training as a young monk in Thailand was all about uncovering the attachments that I had. I could see the coarser attachments, so I could abandon them and let them go because I could

see that they where causing suffering. When Ajahn Chah was building the main hall at Wat Pa Pong, where all the monks training under Ajahn Chah were ordained – some monks here were ordained in that hall at Wat Pa Pong – I was staying at Wat Pah Nanachat. But because they needed more workers to help at Wat Pah Pong we were all called over there for a week. There was a big mound of earth raised by the monks, on which the ordination hall was going to be built. No earth moving machinery was available so all the work was done with what they call 'bungies', hoes and wheel barrows.

After making the mound there was a lot of earth left over, and because it was an eyesore Ajahn Chah told us to move it around to the side. We spent a couple of days moving it to the side. Not just for one or two hours, but from when the meal finished at about nine o'clock in the morning – with hardly time to brush your teeth – just moving wheel barrows until nine thirty or ten o'clock at night. Because we had faith in Ajahn Chah we did that. When it got dark the kerosene lanterns were brought out so that we could see where we were going. We worked until ten o'clock at night and then we had showers in cold water and rested. It took two or three days to move the earth. When it was finished Ajahn Chah went off to another monastery for a few days, and Ajahn Liam the second monk – he is now the abbot at Wat Pa Pong – came along and said, "No, that's not in the right place. Move the earth". Again we worked long hours for two or three days, moving that big pile of earth to another place. You can imagine how we felt as Westerners when Ajahn Chah came back after three days and said, "What did you move it over there for, I told you to move it over here?" So, we had to move it all back again.

That was really a wonderful experience, because it actually taught me something. It taught me that I could suffer if I wanted to, or I could just accept it out of faith in Ajahn Chah. I could say, "These Thai monks are stupid! Why can't they understand or make a decision? This is a stupid way of doing things! Why can't they decide where to put the earth? I never became a monk to shift earth for twelve hours a day". That's what I went to university to escape. I thought that if you go to university you don't have to do that sort of work any more. You can just spend your time telling others what to do. I even thought that when you become an abbot you are the boss and you don't have to work so hard. What a joke! What it taught me to say was,

"Look, if this is causing suffering, if it's *dukkha* to have to move all this earth, it's not the earth that is the cause of the suffering. It's not Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Liam, who are the cause of suffering. It must be some delusions, some attachments or some craving inside me that is the cause of the suffering". This is what Ajahn Chah kept on pointing at. The first noble truth is that *dukkha* is not caused by work. *Dukkha* is not caused by mosquitoes. *Dukkha* is not caused by heat or by cold. *Dukkha* is caused by craving. That's the fundamental teaching of the Buddha. That taught me to look for the cause of suffering elsewhere, not in the externals, but in 'me', in 'my attitude', in 'my craving', in 'my attachment', in 'my delusions'.

Some people just lost it altogether and said, "Well, if this is monastic life, it's not for me". They looked at monastic life as being the cause of suffering or the work as being the cause of suffering or the hierarchy as being the cause of suffering. Everyone in this monastery should know the delusion of that view. We learnt something through that experience. We learnt that if something causes suffering, there must be a wrong attitude. I looked at some of the other monks and they were very happy to move that earth. They weren't just monks who liked working; some of them were great meditators. People like Ajahn Liam could work all day and meditate all night. I sometimes wondered how they could do this, but they could do it and they did do it. You read in the *suttas* about monks working. That is all part of our duties. This is how we realise that it's not the work that is suffering, it is ones attachment to something. It is one's craving for something and one's delusion that is the cause of suffering.

The Dhamma talk, the chanting, the mood or whatever else it is – these aren't the cause of suffering. In fact, in the whole of *saṃsāra*, this monastery is probably one of the most comfortable places to exist. As far as external situations are concerned, you have very little to be concerned or worried about. You have very few problems to deal with and it's so comfortable in this monastery. Where else in the world can you live like this. There were days, a long while ago, when you could live on the dole, but now I am told you have to work at the very minimum seventeen hours per week to get the dole. Here you only have to work ten hours to get your food. That's almost half and that's not counting the retreats and every thing else we do.

If there is any suffering caused by the monastic life style, it's due to your attachments, to the craving inside you. You should look at that, and find out what it is. You know you have gained some insight and uncovered that attachment and wrong view if you can work and be peaceful. But if you cannot work and be peaceful, if you cannot move earth all day and be peaceful, you will never be free from suffering. If you can live in this monastery or any other monastery, and it's just the same for you, then you understand something about the nature of the mind, the nature of freedom, the nature of attachments and the nature of letting go. Whatever food you eat, whatever you're called upon to do, it doesn't matter.

Give This Moment Joy

There is a teaching in the *suttas* where a monk says, "It's too hot to meditate". "It's too cold to meditate." "It's too early to meditate." It's too late to meditate." Monks like that will never gain liberation from suffering. Whether it's hot, whether it's cold, whether it's late, doesn't matter, just meditate now. Whether I'm tired or whether I'm energetic, it doesn't matter, just now I'm meditating. This is how I was trained and it is a training that I'd like to share with you, so that you will be able to develop a mind that is independent of the external situations and circumstances. A mind that really can 'let go' of the world and 'let go' of the body. That's why the great forest teachers – the ones who are Enlightened and give teachings to create other Enlightened monks – always emphasise meditation on the body, mindfulness on the body. Separate the mind from all those bodily feelings that can so easily create tiredness, pain, heat, cold or sometimes even comfort. See these feelings as they are, a play on that world outside.

If one is too attached to the body, then when it's hot the mind is hot too. When it's cold the mind is just freezing. When you're tired the mind is tired. When you're energetic the mind is restless. Sometimes there is just too much of a connection between the body and the mind and so when the world swings one way the mind swings with it. We cannot control the world outside. We've been trying to do that for years. I thought that if I were the abbot of a monastery I could control the situation in the monastery. I can't! I admit to you in all honesty that the monastery is out of control. One can guide it, one can incline it in a certain direction, but basically it's

out of control. The monastery goes its own way according to the Dhamma. We understand that we cannot control the outside world. We can't even control our own bodies, let alone the monastery or other people's bodies. But we can 'let go'. Can you control your own body and get rid of all the aches and the pains? You can't do that. But often because of our delusion and our attachments, because we think we possess this body and this world, we get in there and try to control, change, and manipulate things. We are always thinking of ways to get our own way. That's the cause of suffering in this monastery. Take it as it is, especially until you get peace in your mind. At this moment why can't you accept it as it is?

The moment is here. It's come. You can't change it. Maybe the next moment might be different, but this moment is just like this. This is why the whole path of Buddhism is to 'let go' of trying to change this moment and instead develop a sense of contentment. In other words, let this moment be. The only way you can let the moment be and not try and change it and control it is to find joy in the monastic life. Find joy in your duties. The only way I can carry on talking like this is to actually put happiness into it, to give it meaning, to give it value. The only way I can work so hard, is to give my work value and meaning, to give it joy. That's the only way I can meditate, by giving this moment joy and energy. This is a practice that I have been doing for many years. Realising that I cannot do just what I want to do, I do what I have to do. I make that happy, I give that joy. I invest joy in whatever I am doing. That's been a training – not something that I was born with, but something that I have trained myself to do.

Give joy to whatever you have to do, whether it's moving bricks or it's pushing a wheel barrow, giving a talk or talking to some foolish person who rings up late at night; whatever it is put joy into it. Because that joy goes straight against the fault finding mind, the controlling mind, the negative mind that causes so much attachment and so much suffering. Whatever we're doing, when we develop joy in the mind we're going in the opposite direction to habit. It's so easy to follow our habits of mind and get upset, get depressed or give in to tiredness.

I am reminded of Ajahn Chah with the presence here of Ajahn Anek, one of Ajahn Chah's senior disciples. To just listen to him talk in Thai brings back all the old

memories of Ajahn Chah's teaching. Ajahn Chah said, "Don't follow the moods in your mind. If a mood comes up don't get involved in it. Don't follow. Don't build it up. Don't get attached to it". In other words just let it burn itself out.

We might have anger, but at least we're not going to push that wheel barrow along and build the anger up. If we get tired, that is just bodily tired, that's all. If we get depressed don't sink into that depression. It's just a pit and it gives us so much suffering. Don't get into that depression; instead put joy into the mind. Don't believe in those moods. When we believe in those moods we get attached to them; we believe we are upset. We believe we're tired or depressed. Who is upset, who is tired and who is depressed? Once we can actually detach from these moods they don't occur. Once there is not an 'I', how can there be someone who is upset, someone who is depressed or someone who is angry?

Let Go of the Past and the Future

In Buddhism attachment is where we identify with these states, where we make a 'self' out of them and become them. This is how they find a foothold inside of us. We can see all these things like physical tiredness; it's just the body, that's all. That's why the forest masters told us to just reflect upon the body. Tiredness is part of having a body. The older we get the more tired we get. It is just a natural process. The energy that we have when we're young is going to go. We are never going to have that 'oomph' when we get into our fifties and we're only going to drag ourselves around when we are in our seventies. That's just the nature of this body. We have to get used to it. We can't fight it or control it. What we can do is realise that it's just the body being tired.

Sometimes when I go back to my hut at night my body is so tired. I've been running around all day doing things for people, and then I remember that teaching of the Buddha – I have great faith in the Buddha's teachings – 'Even though the body is sick, the mind doesn't need to be sick. Even though the body is tired, the mind doesn't need to be tired'. These are very powerful teachings! Teachings like these are great, because we are often tired physically but not mentally. That is how we can cheer ourselves up. Separate the mind from the body and even though the body is hurting, we just let it go, and follow the Buddha's teachings on meditation. Let go of

the past and the future, and we're just left with the present moment. Let go of the inner conversation. That inner conversation is the worst thing we're attached to. We think ourselves into so much suffering!

It would be a wonderful thing if we could just shut up inside and stop all of that 'proliferation of thoughts and ideas'. The problem is we trust our thinking. We think it's **so** valuable. Because we trust the views that are built up from our thoughts, we get into so much difficulty and strife. If you want to believe in something believe in silence. If you want to be attached to anything, be attached to that silence in the mind. Seek that out and make it a friend. *All lies are in words, all truth is in silence*. So we can see that if we listen to words they're basically lies: it's not quite truth, it's not quite reality, it's not quite accuracy, it is one stage removed from truth. We believe all those lies again and again and again. How much suffering has that caused us? We don't gain insight through thinking, we just gain headaches. We just gain suffering. We just gain arguments. We just gain confusion and depression. That's all we gain though thinking.

Follow the Buddha's advice and be quiet, be calm. The Buddhist word for a wise person is an *Arahant*, a *santa muni*, a silent sage. There is wisdom in that silence. That's where we can start hearing the world, seeing the world, feeling the world, knowing what's going on. So you are wise if you are pushing wheel barrows with a silent mind. Then it's easy. That reminds me of when I was a student. I don't know how I got involved because I was never very athletic, but going to a place like Cambridge they roped me into the boat club. So for at least one year I was rowing in a boat along the river. It was a crazy way to spend an afternoon because it was really hard work. I thought, 'It's just rowing on a nice afternoon in the sunshine. It doesn't matter how fast we go as long as we enjoy ourselves'. That was not what the coach thought. The coach wanted us to go fast and beat the other teams. I remember once during a race rowing as hard as I could and feeling a lot of physical pain. The coach shouted at me, "You're scowling; smile and it won't hurt so much". It was true. I followed his advice and even though I was in pain, I put a smile on my face and half the pain disappeared. I was able row on quite fast. It's the same with whatever we're doing in life. We can put happiness into it or we can put pain into it.

From our external experiences thoughts arise and proliferate and we can create this whole mass of suffering over what we are doing, or we can just shut up. As we shut up we become more peaceful. We realise this is just a physical body, sometimes it hurts, sometimes it's a pleasure, sometimes it's comfortable, sometimes it's a discomfort. We can't control it at all. Wherever we go in the world, however wealthy or powerful we are, it's always the same. Now it's pleasurable, now it's painful. Now it's comfortable, now it's uncomfortable. Now we hear something nice that we like to hear, now we hear something that we don't like to hear. Now we see beauty, now you see ugliness. Now we taste something that is delicious, now we taste something that is awful. That's life, sensory experience. If we start thinking about that and try to find ways and means to get what we like – only the nice and pleasurable, only the delicious food, only the monastery we like – we find we can't do that. It's impossible. We'd be running around the whole world forever. Ajahn Chah used to say that we're searching for the tortoise with the moustache. Tortoises don't have moustaches! That's why pleasure in the physical world won't be found. I'm talking about permanent pleasure, permanent satisfaction. We only have moments of happiness.

If something is causing you suffering, it must be wrong attitude or wrong understanding. You're looking at things in the incorrect way. You're not letting go. The whole purpose of this practice is to let go of the world of the body and the five senses. That means not just *your* physical body, but all physical bodies – the monastery, the country, and the whole world. Letting go of that means being able to close your eyes and just be silent. Not allowing the experiences of the day to echo in your meditation. The ability to let go of the past is such a fundamental aspect of this meditation. Do you understand how you carry the past into the present moment when you try to meditate? How difficult that makes the meditation. There is no good reason to carry the past into the present. We don't have to do that, its attachment that's all. Its stupidity! The past is gone, finished, done with. We can't change it.

Very often we look at the past with biased opinions. We seek out what happened in the past according to the emotions that are present in the mind now. If we're feeling happy, great, we look at all the good things that happened today. If we're in a bad mood we look at all the bad things that happened today. The best way is not to look

at all. Who can trust memory? In meditation, it doesn't matter what we've just been doing. If someone's argued with us or called us stupid, or someone on the phone has been talking foolish nonsense for a long time, just let that go. The next moment it's gone. The only way to meditate is by letting go and freeing yourself from the past. Do that at least while you're staying at this monastery. Get that degree of insight and that degree of ability to cut off the past, even what happened a moment ago.

Sometimes when I begin to meditate I haven't got my wisdom faculty turned on, so the first part of the meditation is hopeless. I'm thinking about the monastery or worrying about this or that. But I always remember that at any moment in the meditation I can turn it around and turn a hopeless meditation into a brilliant meditation by just letting go of the past. When I first began to meditate, if I started with a rotten meditation I'd worry about it, and it would carry on right through the whole hour. I would carry the mistakes of the past into the present all the time, thinking, 'This is a rotten meditation', or 'I can't meditate. Why isn't it working well?' But the point was not 'Why isn't it working well': I came to realise that I was just lingering on attachments to the past. This is why we have to learn how to let go of the past if we want to be free, if we want to be at peace, if we want to develop meditation, especially deep states of meditation.

Give It Everything You've Got

I trained myself and I want you to train yourselves, so that at any moment you can just turn to the 'present moment' to be completely free, even if you have great pain, unsatisfactoriness, or difficulties. If you can be just there in the present moment then you find that you are completely free of everything that has happened. You don't even recall it; you've cut the mind off from what's happened in the past. It doesn't matter if you've been wheel-barrowing earth for six or seven days for a reason you just cannot understand. It doesn't matter what you have been doing. The wheel-barrow that you are wheeling now is all that's important. Don't go about saying, "Why am I doing this. This isn't what I became a monk for!" You realise that is just causing you suffering. Let go of all of the past and stay in the present moment. I let go of all the business that I see on my desk as I close my eyes before meditating, I don't even worry about it. I'm only a part time abbot. It's true. When I do my work I'm an abbot. When I close my eyes, I'm not an abbot; I'm a meditator in this present

moment. That's the way I survive and that's the way you have to survive. You've all got projects and things you have to do – difficulties, responsibilities and pain in the body – but follow this advice and let go of the past and the future. Dwell in the present moment because that is the only place you can get some quietness.

It doesn't matter about all the mistakes you've made, all the errors you've made. They are only problems and difficulties if you keep hanging on to them. Let them go! Some people say you can't do that unless you believe you can do it. But *you* can do it! Even Aṅgulimāla (MN 86) with all his bad *kamma* became Enlightened in a very short time. The only people who can't let go are people who have killed their mother or father in this life. When you realise you can just let go in this way, you understand how to meditate. You let go of your attachments to the past, you let go of your attachment to this body. If you can do this, then you know you are getting somewhere on this path. *You can do this*!

If you can't do this yet, then you have more training to do. You don't have to go somewhere else to do it. Everywhere else is basically the same as here. You have to do this now, here in this moment. There comes a time when you just stand your ground and say, "Māra, I'm not going to follow your tricks anymore! This is where I'm going to stand and do battle". Just do as the Buddha said: let go of the past and the future, let go of the thinking mind, be silent and watch the breath. Just be with every breath. "Why can't I do that all the time?" We make things so hard and complex and complicated. It's easy to watch the breath if you can let go of the past and the future. Let go of the thinking mind. Let go of controlling. Don't do it your way, do it in the Buddha's way. Just watch the breath. We can watch the breath in this moment. That's all we need to do. It's just a case of having the right attitude of detachment. It's easy then to watch the breath.

The success of years of meditation is a sign of how much you have detached from the world. If you can't meditate it's because there is some craving, some attachment there. Put enjoyment into the breath in the same way as you put enjoyment into sweeping up leaves. As Ajahn Chah used to say, "Give it everything you've got no matter what you're doing". Brushing your teeth give it everything you've got, make it a very good job. Pushing the wheel-barrow, make it a beautiful job. Do the best you

can. Give it full attention every moment, that's how you watch the breath. Give yourself completely to the breath. Complete surrender to the breath. It doesn't matter what your body is doing, how early or how late it is, how hot or how cold it is, just be with the breath for a few moments. If you can do this and follow the instructions, you will find it is the easiest thing in the world to watch the breath. It's easy if you are detached, if you can let go. So find that way of letting go, train yourself to let go. When you're watching the breath it's the last part of the body that you're still attached to. And if you continue just watching the breath, being with the breath, the mind becomes so bright, so beautiful and it becomes apparent that it's a natural process.

In the Footsteps of the Buddha

Enjoy the meditation and the meditation becomes fun. That's because you are beginning to let go of the world. The longer you can let go of the world the more that enjoyment and pleasure increases. Meditate for five minutes, it feels good. I'm talking about real meditation, watching the breath, not messing around and thinking. If you can watch the breath for five minutes at ease in the moment, just being with the breath, not controlling, it becomes peaceful, and if you can continue that for an hour it becomes very delightful. The longer you maintain the attention on the breath, the more the mind grows in happiness, grows in energy, grows in contentment. It's the build up of *samādhi* that's all. As you build up that *samādhi* on the breath, bliss takes over. If you're patient enough, don't interfere and don't try and control it, it becomes the 'beautiful breath'.

The 'beautiful breath' is just the nature of the breath at this particular stage. If you can get to this stage it means you've detached from so much. You've detached from the world long enough, let go of the world long enough, for the mind to start to brighten up the consciousness. What happens next is that, from that brightness, as it grows more and more and more into the 'beautiful breath', the breath disappears. You're just left with the 'beautiful' and the beautiful turns into a beautiful *nimmitta*, which is the reflection of the mind. That shows that you've let go of even more. It's a sign of detachment from the world, a sign of letting go, a sign that wisdom is starting to manifest. If you can go into that *nimmitta* you can also go into a *jhāna*. You are re-experiencing the footsteps of the Buddha. These are the signs of letting

go, it's called *nekkhamma sukha*, because it is the happiness born of renunciation. Renunciation is just another word for letting go.

If you can't go into a *nimmitta* or a *jhāna* that means that you still have a lot more 'letting go' to do. It means there are still attachments and delusions there. You still haven't seen what needs to be done or how to do it. So be humble, don't be proud, and don't follow your own ideas. If you can't get into these deep states it means there is something you haven't seen yet. See if you can do some more 'letting go', some more renunciation. Have trust in the practice of the forest teachers, these are the people who do become Enlightened, who do get *samādhi*, who do get *jhānas*. This is the path for overcoming the attachments. Only after you have entered into those *jhānas* and emerged have you got the basic data, the experience of pure mind and the experience of seeing things cease. Only then have you got the opportunity and chance to really see the three characteristics. You have to achieve those *jhānas* for yourself!

Without these experiences you haven't yet learned enough to see *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. That is why you need to have these experiences sooner or later. Only when you've 'let go' that much, can you really understand what 'letting go' is. If you haven't been able to get into *jhānas* yet it means you still have attachments. You haven't seen, let alone untied the attachments. There are still cravings, and there are still illusions. Illusions are overcome by seeing how everything works through a widening perspective, through seeing things from a different standpoint. That's the whole point of the *jhānas*, they give you a different perspective, a different standpoint, a place from which to look upon the world with such obvious clarity and see *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. You can't see them without that experience. People look in the *suttas* to try and find ways of getting around this but they always end with the last factor of the Eightfold Path, which is the four *jhānas*. That's not just said once in the *suttas*, it's said many, many times. You just have to do this!

So don't be proud, don't be stubborn, just give yourself up to the teaching of the Buddha, to the Eightfold Path. Don't think too much. Don't try and work it all out intellectually. Just unbind (let go) of yourself, and get some silence in the mind. Don't waste the opportunities you have. It doesn't matter what you have been doing

in the morning, afternoon or evening, when you're meditating don't let the past hinder your progress. That's the only way to release yourself. Once you can do these things you will see the Dhamma for yourself. It's not just theory, it's also experiences. You know what attachment is because you can detach yourself. You can experience it as a process, not just as an idea. You know what letting go is because you've experienced it. You know what freedom is because you've experienced that freedom. You know what the Buddha's mind is like, because you have experienced the same thing. You know how this whole process works. You've let go of so much that there is only a tiny bit more to let go of. If you can't let go of that last bit, a least you've let go of so much that you should at least be an *Anāgāmī*.

We need more of those kinds of monks in the world. We don't need more monks building monasteries. We don't need more monks writing books or translating books. We need more monks who can give talks from their own experiences. We need more monks who are *Ariyas*. We need more monks who are Stream Winners, more monks who are *Arahants*, more monks who have experienced *jhānas*. We need more monks who can walk in the footsteps of the great monks of old, who can say that they've experienced what Venerable Sāriputta, what Venerable Moggallāna, what Venerable Kassapa, what Venerable Ānanda, and what Venerable Anuruddha experienced. This Buddhism is not just an historical point of interest; it is alive with the re-experiencing of all the facets of the Dhamma. So let go of your attachments, have confidence and faith. It can be done!

There was a novice who saw a man training an elephant and he thought, 'If a man can train a wild elephant, surely I can train my mind'. You're much smaller than an elephant and you're not as stubborn as a wild elephant. So if a man can train a wild elephant to do whatever he wants, surely you can train your own mind? To train your mind don't give in to it, don't follow its moods and don't follow its stupidity. Just train the mind. Don't go with the stream of your ideas, and thoughts, and delusions. Go against that stream. Be rebellious against your instincts and cravings.

If someone says, "You can't do this", I say, "Why?" When I was a kid if someone put a sign on a park bench saying 'Don't Touch', I would touch it out of spite. It didn't

matter if I got paint on my hand or I got into trouble. Using that rebelliousness in the Dhamma, if I'm too tired to meditate, I check it out anyway.

One of my most interesting meditations was when I had typhus fever. You're not supposed to be able get into deep meditation when you have typhus fever because you have no energy at all. This was in the hospital in Ubon, Thailand, twenty-four years ago. The first day I was there, at six o'clock in the afternoon the nurse disappeared. I asked the monk next to me, "When is the night nurse coming on?" – "Night nurse?" he said, "There is no night nurse. If you die at night that's bad luck; there is only a nurse during the daytime". I don't know if you could really call them nurses, they were really tough and not at all sensitive.

I remember having to go to the toilet. There were no bed pans: I had to lurch from one bed to the next one and then hold on until I got enough energy to lurch to the next bed. I had to hold on because I had no strength at all, and my head was dizzy. When I finally got to the toilet I stayed there as long as possible to make sure that everything was out, because I didn't want to go through that experience again for a few hours. I was very weak and no one was helping me. I remember feeling so rotten and terrible, so weak and so sick and so depressed, after being in hospital for a couple of weeks with typhus fever. There was no care of any sort. And then I got so rebellious! I thought, 'So what! I'm going to watch my breath'. Now you're not supposed to be able to do that, it's supposed to be impossible when you're so sick. But I just watched my breath and got into a nice deep meditation. It was wonderful; it was the best part of being in hospital, the best part of the typhus fever. Being able to meditate and get into deep meditation, just getting 'blissed out' in that way was great.

That experience taught me how much the body lies. The body said, 'You can't meditate now', but I called its bluff. Sometimes I could even meditate when in great pain. You can do it if you believe you can. It's always been a part of my practice to be completely rebellious. When someone tells me I can't, I ask, "Why not?"

Hopefully this will be an encouragement to each one of you. If it's late, it doesn't matter. If you feel tired and so sleepy, it doesn't matter. If you're really sick, it doesn't matter. Just go against the stream, go against the accepted ideas, and liberate

yourself from all that's happened in the past. The last moment I was tired, but what about this moment. This is how you can practise, how you can let go of attachments, how you can free yourself, and how you can discover the wonder and supremacy of the mind. The mind is the forerunner of all things. It's the most powerful of all things. You create your own suffering. You can create your own liberation. So it's all up to you!

6 THE OPENING OF THE LOTUS

3rd May 2000

This is the first talk I have given since teaching the annual nine-day retreat for the local lay Buddhists. I always have a wonderful time on those retreats. It is a time when all my attention is focussed on meditation, and on the Dhamma. One of the things that became very clear to me on that retreat was that there is no difference between the Dhamma and meditation. One should incorporate as much Dhamma as possible into the way one meditates. If you can incorporate all your understanding of the Dhamma into the meditation, then this is a very powerful and effective way to gain the goal in Buddhism.

I find it's not possible to separate these two things. Thinking that meditation is somehow separate from the teaching of the Buddha, or that the teachings of the Buddha are somehow separate from the meditation practice, will not lead to success. The Dhamma and meditation go together so beautifully. One of the things I taught regularly to the lay meditators during the retreat was, 'When you are meditating remember the basic teachings of the Buddha!'

The Teflon Mind

Keep the Dhamma in mind as you are meditating; particularly keep in mind the Four Noble Truths as an indication of what you should be doing when you are meditating. In particular I focussed their attention on the second and third noble truths. The second noble truth is craving or more especially *kāma taṇhā*, the craving for the five-sense world, the craving to be, which includes the craving to do, and the craving for annihilation. These invariably lead to *dukkha*, to suffering.

So how can you expect to become peaceful or get into a deep meditation when you are following the path of the second noble truth? You can only get into deep meditation if you remember the third noble truth, which is the ending of that craving, the path to *Nibbāna*. The path to *Nibbāna* is the path to the highest bliss, the highest peace, and it is achieved through *cāga paṭinissagga mutti anālaya*. These four Pāli words mean giving up. *Cāga* is giving away, *paṭinissagga* is renouncing, forfeiting,

mutti is releasing and *anālaya* is not letting anything find a roosting place in your mind, not having a place where things can stick. I told someone this evening that, "With a 'Teflon mind' the thoughts and ideas don't stick, they just slip away".

With these Dhamma teachings in the mind it becomes very easy to succeed in meditation. You understand what you are doing and that helps the meditation. You begin to understand what it is you are doing that is obstructing success in the meditation. As far as this meditation is concerned, if you really practise the third noble truth, if you really do let go without exception, freely opening up and not having a place where things can stick in the mind, you will find the mind opens up and becomes very peaceful and quiet. The mind goes through the stages of meditation all the way into the *jhānas*. It's the natural unfolding of the peaceful mind.

So often when we're practising our meditation, we are following the second noble truth instead, that is craving. It is concern for things in the world, and thoughts about the past and the future. It is thoughts about family, thoughts about our health; thoughts about our comfort and our bodies, thoughts about the sounds that other people are making, thoughts about heat and cold, thoughts about what you're going to do tomorrow, thoughts about when you are going to do it, and where you are going to go. All of those thoughts are the concerns of the five-sense world. In Pāli they are *kāma taṇhā*: craving for comfort, for satisfaction, for fulfilment, for success in the world of the five senses.

We should know now from our own experience and through the Dhamma – the teachings of the Buddha, the four noble truths – that this concern is not the way of peace, of happiness, or of release in one's meditation. It will only produce more suffering, more frustration, more disappointment, and more pain in the mind. This is what is meant by 'cause and effect'. We know where this path will lead us if we follow it. So we should know that whenever there is pain, frustration, or despair in the mind we have to work back to find the craving which is the cause. Learn from your mistakes. Learn from the wrong attitudes of the mind. Don't be foolish and generate suffering, suffering, suffering, for your whole life and through many lives, through many world cycles. Don't be stupid, learn from experience. If it's suffering,

if it's despair, frustration, disappointment, or whatever, it is something to do with the first noble truth. The craving to be always comes from the illusion of self, *attā*. People often have very strong egos and a very strong sense of self from pride. They are the ones who find it very difficult to meditate.

Sometimes one needs to develop humility, the ability to surrender. I notice that people who have enormous faith are usually the ones who have an easier time doing the meditation. They get into deep states of meditation because of faith in the teaching and faith in a teacher. Faith in the Buddha is something that overcomes faith in ones ego. Everyone has some sort of faith, some sort of belief, but so often it is belief in oneself; in one's own wisdom, in one's own intelligence, in ones own knowledge and that very often obstructs the progress on the path.

When I teach retreats I often see this. Some of the Asian meditators are able to go far deeper in their meditation, because generally speaking they trust what a monk says, they don't argue with it, they don't think twice about it, they just do it. They follow the instructions and it works. In contrast many Westerners are so independent, basically so conceited and arrogant, that sometimes we don't want to follow what the teacher says, or what the Buddha says. We want to find out in our own way what we think must be right. When one is not yet a Stream Winner that belief in ones own ideas and views is very uncertain, it creates so much of a burden, so much of an obstacle in your monastic life. Be careful what you put your faith in. As you know faith or *saddhā,* is one of the five spiritual qualities, the five *indriyas*. It's very important to have faith at the beginning of your practice because you haven't grown in *paññā*, in wisdom yet. When one has gained wisdom, then that faith is confirmed. You are stronger in the faith because you have seen that truth for yourself. Ajahn Chah used to say that when you have been a monk for five years you have five per cent of wisdom. Someone asked, "Does that mean when you have four years as a monk that you have four per cent wisdom?" He said, "No, when you've got four years you've got zero wisdom". What he said was very wise: if you've got zero wisdom you have to accept it and do as you are told. Trust in Ajahn Chah and you'll go much further than if you trust in yourself. I've seen that degree of faith, that degree of surrender, in some of the Asian meditators and because of that they follow

instructions without question.

It's amazing that with some Westerners things often go wrong with the tools and equipment they buy because they don't read the instructions before they plug in and start using them. That's the arrogance of people these days; they think that they are so superior; they think they know it all. They have faith in their own abilities and that's why they are always falling on their faces. A person who truly has faith would read the instructions, understand those instructions, and if there were any questions would read it again until they understood the instructions, and then they would proceed. *The instructions are very clear, craving leads to suffering, letting go leads to peace*.

So what do people do when they try to meditate? They crave to get peaceful. They work hard to get peaceful, they strive, and they screw their minds up to get peaceful. And then they just get frustrated and think, 'I can't meditate'. It's true that *you* can't meditate. No *attā*, no 'self', can do the meditation: you have got to get out of the way. Put the '**I**' aside and then you find that meditation happens. You can't do meditation; you've got to just get out of the way for meditation to occur. It's a whole process and that's precisely what the second noble truth means. It was amazing to see in the retreat how stubborn people are. They will always try and do things.

One of the most powerful methods of meditation that I practise is 'contentment'. I don't teach things and then do something else; all of the methods that I teach are the methods I practise myself. Contentment means being happy to be here, wherever you are. The reason contentment works is because it's going against the second noble truth and it's fulfilling the third noble truth.

You have to be careful of 'contentment' because it doesn't mean being content to follow the cravings and the *dhamma* qualities of the mind. It's a different type of contentment. I always know when it's real 'contentment' because I don't move. If I was not content then I would always be looking for happiness somewhere else. That's the opposite of contentment. Discontent causes restlessness, causes movement of the mind, and causes craving, reaching out and trying to find something else to feed the needs of the mind. If its discontent you get *kāma chanda*, sensual desire, the first

hindrance. You want to find some better comfort, something happier and more pleasant, you want to get rid of the pain in the body. *Kāma chanda* comes from discontent. Discontent is ill will, it is not being happy with the meditation, with yourself or with anybody else.

From discontent people often go into sloth and torpor just to escape, because they can't face the present moment or the present life. One extra hour in bed in the morning means one hour less you have to meditate or one hour less you have to face the cold world. Restlessness, worry, or remorse are obviously discontent, doubt is discontent, as is the desire to know, to figure things out. Shut up and be peaceful! You know everything you need to know. All the five hindrances are born of discontent. In the Nalakapāna Sutta (MN 68) it says that only when you achieve the *jhānas* are the five hindrances, and interestingly discontent and weariness overcome. It's interesting in that *sutta* to see that the Buddha linked the five hindrances and discontent, and how the five hindrances plus discontent give rise to weariness, and heaviness in the body. Weariness makes it so hard to drag yourself out of bed in the morning, out from under those nice warm covers.

If our meditation is going well, if we have overcome the five hindrances, we have energy and the heaviness of the body disappears. During the retreat it was often hard for me to stop skipping around the place, because when you are enjoying yourself you want to get up earlier and earlier. That's just the way of the body and the mind. When the mind has energy it is no longer weary. Discontent is at the heart of the five hindrances, and it's also at the heart of the second noble truth.

From discontent craving arises. So check your meditation. Ask yourself, 'Am I content where I am, or do I really want to get quickly into a *jhāna*?' 'Do I really want to get quickly through the next stages?' 'Do I really want to get quickly through this talk and get somewhere else?' Be careful of discontent because it causes so much restlessness, so much inner activity and thinking. I've noticed before that if I'm listening to a beautiful talk it brings me so much happiness. I'm silent inside because I don't need to speak, because the talk is so beautiful. I'm just listening to it and getting high, having a wonderful time. But if we don't like the talk, or discontent

comes into the mind, then we start thinking, fantasising, dreaming, or falling asleep. Discontent has moved us away from what is happening. We all make use of escape mechanisms that we've stupidly built up over lifetimes rather than face the present, rather than face what's happening now. We are always trying to run away; that's restlessness. That habit can very easily manifest in our meditation: instead of facing up to what's happening, and developing contentment in the moment, people run away. They run away into thinking, philosophising, dreaming, and fantasising. That's not the way to meditate. That's the second noble truth and it only leads to suffering. You should know that by now.

Following the Instructions

Follow the third noble truth of letting go. When we say *cāga* or generosity, we are giving up and abandoning; that means surrendering, forsaking, *paṭinissagga*. What do we have to forsake? We have to forsake our old views, ideas and conceits. This is hard to do because we are so stubborn. One of the monks, sitting in with me during the retreat interviews, asked me, "Why do you think it is that people come on retreat and get all these good results, when sometimes monks at the monastery, can meditate for years and not even experience a *nimmitta* ?" Some of the people on retreat lead very busy lives. They don't have much time to meditate, certainly not as much as the monks and *anagārikas*. In the monastery you only have to do two hours work on five days of the week, whereas these people work forty, fifty, or sixty hours a week, plus all the other business they have to do. In those nine days of meditation it was amazing to see how many of them achieved decent meditations and even had *nimmittas* arise. So I said, "It's because some of the monks are stubborn" and that's quite true. Sometimes instead of just listening and following the instructions, so often we want to make our own instructions.

Instead of listening to what the Buddha said we want to interpret it to suit our own ideas. That's the stubbornness in Westerners. And I can understand it because you have to be stubborn to become monks in the first place. You have to go against the stream of the world to become a monk, so that stubbornness is sometimes inherent in monks. Nevertheless, if one uses one's intelligence and experience to overcome that stubbornness – to just be happy with simple duties, to renounce and to let go – then

you can get into deep meditation. But you have to renounce and let go stage by stage.

That's why I teach meditation in stages. Let go of the past and the future, just be in the present. By the simple process of being in the present moment, so much restlessness, so much thinking, and so much of the craving stops. I'm not only saying this about a novice meditation or a preliminary meditation – if I were to say things like that people would think, "Oh, I'm much more advanced than that, I'm going to do the deeper meditation not 'present moment awareness', that's kids stuff." I still do present moment awareness meditation myself. I employ it at all stages of meditation. It's wonderful how powerful it is.

On the retreat I also taught *ekaggatā citta*, this mind that has gone to one peak of being; one peak in space, one point in space. Instead of looking at it that way, look at this meditation of *ekaggatā citta* as being one peak or one point in time. Focus not in space but in this moment in time, centred in the peak of this moment, right in the middle of past and future. If you look at *ekaggatā* as one-pointedness in time you will get much deeper in your meditation. You will really understand what this meditation is all about rather than have some sort of spacious awareness or focusing your attention on the 'tip' of something. This is where you can get into beautiful contentment, just by being in the moment.

If you are fully aware in the moment, silence emerges from within the present moment. You don't need to go looking for something else, or move on to the next stage of meditation; you move *into* the next stage of meditation or rather *the next stage of the meditation moves into you*. But watch it: if you 'let go' you will experience *mutti*, which means freeing, opening up. The Buddha said that as a teacher he had a *mutti* fist, an open fist, he didn't keep anything secret. One way to understand what that Pāli word means is, instead of gripping the meditation object in your fist, you just open it up. That's *mutti*, that's release, that's openness. That's the reason when people open themselves up to the breath, to the silence or to the present moment. They begin to get some understanding of the third noble truth.

You are not controlling, you are not manipulating, and you are not doing so much

anymore. All that controlling, manipulating, doing, is part of the craving to be. Craving is born of the illusion of 'mine', mine to control, and mine to order. Leave all that alone – that only leads to suffering, to pain, to more discontent, more craving and suffering. It's a vicious cycle that we can get into. Discontent producing craving, craving producing *dukkha*, suffering, and suffering and discontent produces more craving. It's so hard to let go! Once you find the 'let go button', you will find that in the present moment silence just emerges from within.

The Buddha used the simile of cool water for the *jhānas*. Cool water doesn't come from the North, South, East or West of the lake; it comes from within a spring in the middle of the lake, drenching the pool with this beautiful cool water. That simile applies to all stages of the meditation. You just have to stay in the present moment and this beautiful silence wells up from within that experience, within that moment, within that mind; it comes from within and cools everything down, it makes everything so silent.

Skilful meditators have the experience that *they* don't make the mind silent, the silence just arrives. You will find that you cannot make the mind silent; 'you' cannot do that. I can't meditate to gain silence; the '**I**' has to go away. Silence comes in its own time. When you are ready, when you've settled down enough, not doing anything, then *mutti* means that the claws of the mind have opened up enough so that the silence can come in. Then in that silence – if you wait long enough – the breath will arise, especially if you have done meditation on the breath before.

Doing Less and Less

As a young monk, I always tried very hard to watch the breath. When I first came to Perth, I wasn't as skilled as I am now with breath meditation: I would watch the breath for forty-five minutes with great difficulty; it was just too hard to keep the attention on the breath. But then I developed the 'letting go' meditation, saying to myself 'just let go'. As soon as I did 'letting go meditation' the breath appeared very easily and I could watch it for the next half-hour or so if I wanted to. It really struck me that by trying to focus on the breath I had difficulty, but if I just let go and didn't care what came up in my mind, the breath was right there. The breath was easy to

hold in the mind's eye and I was still. It showed me that it's often hard to watch the breath if you try too much. When you are trying, that's craving – craving to be or to do something – and that leads to suffering. You can't get success in meditation that way. If only I'd realised and kept the four noble truths in mind when I was meditating, I wouldn't have wasted so much time. I would have just been peaceful. When we're letting go, contented, and silent, the breath arises within the silence, as if the breath is just there. We don't have to force the mind onto it, we don't have to control it, we don't have to worry about where we are going to watch the breath – at the nose, at the stomach – we don't have to worry about what we should do with the breath. The breath just comes by itself when it's ready and we're just sitting there watching it. The whole process of meditation is to try and do less and less. Try and do more of *cāga paṭinissagga mutti*, just allowing the mind to open up.

The other simile that I have used before is a lotus opening its petals. Just imagine a lotus opening up petal by petal. The outer petals are 'present moment awareness'. They reveal the next layer of petals, which reveals the next layer of petals, which is called the 'breath', and that reveals the next petals, the 'beautiful breath'. As you go into a lotus the petals get softer and softer, more refined and fragrant. You are getting closer to the heart of the lotus. That's just the way it is – you don't need to move onto another lotus to get to the next stage of the meditation. If you throw away this lotus that has already opened up so much, to try and get to the next stage, all you get is a lotus which hasn't opened up at all. If you want to move from the 'breath' to the 'beautiful breath' quickly, and if you throw away the breath, you just get a restless mind and you can't even stay in the present moment. Do this stage by stage making the mind as cool and as still as possible, being careful that craving doesn't come in.

If craving does come in don't give it a place to stay, don't give the chicken a place to roost. The chicken is a great symbol for craving. Just leave it! When it hasn't got a place to settle down, any moment of craving will just disappear straight away and nothing will stick to the mind. So you're just watching the breath, making the mind non-sticky, making it free and open. It's just a matter of time before that breath turns into a very beautiful and calm breath. It calms down by itself if you get out of the way, because that's the nature of things.

Once the beautiful breath appears the whole process just happens in spite all of your plans, intentions, manipulations, and control. Whether you think you can meditate or you think you can't, you think you want to or you don't want to, whether you're afraid of *jhānas* or you're not afraid of *jhānas*, whatever happens it's just a process. And as long as you don't interfere with it, it takes you all the way into *jhānas*. When the beautiful breath comes up it gives you a sense of *pīti*, the joy of meditation.

Many monks know that beautiful *sutta*, I forget its name now but I think it's in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, where it says that once *pīti* arises in the mind, the monk no longer needs to make the determination, resolution, or choice, 'May I now experience the tranquillity of body and mind'. The Buddha said it's a natural process, it has to happen. It's a natural consequence for one whose mind experiences joy that their body and mind will experience tranquillity. It's a natural experience once the 'beautiful breath' comes up, that the body is light and peaceful. The mind, instead of running around all over the place and having this irritating restlessness, becomes tranquil, still and peaceful. The Buddha said that for one whose mind is tranquil, there is no need to make the resolution, 'May happiness appear in my mind'. Happiness naturally has to happen. It is an automatic process in one whose body and mind is tranquil that happiness, *sukha*, arises!

So you just watch this happening, you just stay with the breath and it turns into a beautiful breath all by itself. *Sukha*, happiness, arises in the mind; the lotus is opening up. You don't need to rush the process; rushing the process is craving, which leads to suffering. We are opening up to the process, giving up, and letting go. The Buddha continued by saying that for one whose mind experiences *sukha*, happiness, there is no need to make a resolution, to determine, to manipulate, force or even choose, 'May my mind experience *samādhi*'. For one in whose mind there is this happiness, their mind enters *samādhi*. It's a natural course, it's automatic. It's a process that just happens.

This is a very powerful and beautiful teaching of the Buddha. It is saying that if we try, it doesn't work, if we let go it works. If we crave it's just more suffering and we can't get into these beautiful, blissful states. They are not stages of craving but stages

of letting go, not stages of attachment but stages of renunciation. They're actually putting into practise the teachings of the Buddha, the four noble truths. It's doing what the Buddha said to do and experiencing the results, not as a theory but in our own bare experience. *Samādhi arises from the beautiful breath.* The mind starts to become still, sustaining its attention, because it is satisfied.

We notice that the mind needs some satisfaction. If it does not get that satisfaction in the meditation it will seek satisfaction in the company of others. It will seek satisfaction by looking for projects to do. It will seek satisfaction in writing books. It will seek satisfaction, eventually, in disrobing. The mind seeks satisfaction if we don't give it happiness; in meditation the mind will always go somewhere else. So the only way to keep the mind still is through the satisfaction of *sukha*, that stillness, that sustained attention of the mind which is called *samādhi*. This is where *sukha* and *samādhi* work together, folding around each other, supporting each other.

The mind begins to sustain its attention effortlessly, as a natural process, and the happiness increases. It is like the happiness of being released from a very demanding boss at work. It's the happiness of being released from debt, released from sickness, released from jail, having found one's way through a desert. It is release from the five hindrances. This is the sort of happiness that starts to come up in the meditation and that happiness leads to more *samādhi*, more 'staying with what's going on'. When the breath starts to become 'beautiful' there is no more in-breath, there is no more out-breath, there is just breath. The meditation object is becoming more and more refined, more and more simple. There is just the continuous feeling, or rather the one feeling of this moment. You are so focused in this moment, so *ekaggatā*, one-pointed in time, that there is just the feeling. You know it's the breath beginning, the breath ending, the middle, the end, in-or out-breath, but it all feels the same. It is just breath!

That's what I mean by the 'beautiful breath one-pointed in time', just one experience only. From that stage *nimmittas* well up from within. At times people have a problem at this stage of the meditation: should we stay with the *nimmittas* or should we return to the breath? Sometimes the best thing to do is just to remember the metaphor of all these things rising from within, like the cool spring of water welling

up from within the lake in which you are now. Allow that *nimmitta* to come right within the centre of this breath happening now. If the *nimmitta* is not strong, you can only just see it with the breath around it – the cool fresh water in the centre with the warmer water of breath on the outside, like a ring. You are still aware of the beautiful breath but with the *nimmitta* in the middle. This is what happens if the *nimmitta* is strong enough: there is a flow of cool beautiful water, powerful enough to push the breath right off the edges of the mind, and all you'll have left is the *nimmitta*. If the *nimmitta* is not strong it will sink back again and just the warm waters of the beautiful breath will remain. You're not ready yet. Whatever happens, it's a natural process and all you do is watch. The Buddha said it's a natural process; you do not need to make any resolutions, it happens all by itself. In fact it's best if you step out of the way as soon as possible. That's why we call them 'stages of letting go'. So allow each stage to come up within the next, to come from within the stage you are in now. It's like a lotus opening up. The inner petals of the lotus are within the ones appearing to you now.

Mutti is just opening up the stages of meditation, opening up the beautiful breath, not abandoning it, not trying to get rid of it but opening it up. You open it up, you abandon what's caging it, what's keeping it from going further – open it up and you find the *nimmitta* starts to be very brilliant. What you do next is the same thing again. From that *nimmitta*, from the very centre of the *nimmitta*, flows the cool beautiful water of *jhāna*. You don't need to move towards the *nimmitta* or do anything. Just allow the *nimmitta* to be there at the very centre of the experience. In the same way that the breath is pushed to the edges of your mind by the beautiful cool waters of the *nimmitta*, so, using the same simile, the *jhānas* just push the *nimmitta* to the edges of the mind. The *nimmitta* is gone and you're left with the *jhānas*.

The Ending of Everything

If we want to go to the second *jhāna* it comes from the very centre of the first *jhāna*, pushing out the first *jhāna* like the cooler, purer water coming from the spring pushing the old pure water to the edges of the spring and then out from your perception – that's how *samādhi* happens. You find that this only happens when you take relinquishment as the central theme (*ārammaṇa*) of your meditation. In the Indriya

Saṃyutta there is something that impressed me as a young monk. It must have been twenty three years ago, when I saw this. It says that the mind which has the *ārammaṇa*, the mood, the inclination, of *vossagga*, easily attains *samādhi*, easily attains *ekaggatā citta*, it reaches one peak. *Vossagga* and *paṭinissagga* are pretty much the same words, *vossagga* means abandoning, giving up and opening, freeing, doing nothing. All of these Pāli words are part of the meaning of the third noble truth.

If that is the inclination of the mind, if that is what you are holding in the mind, if it's the theme of the mind, if that's what the mind is tending towards, then you are tending towards the third noble truth, and the mind opens up and the *jhānas* come all by themselves. Never think 'I can do *jhānas*' or 'I can't do *jhānas*' because both are stupid statements. That's why I get a bit peeved sometimes when people say they can't do *jhānas*, because if they only knew it, what they are saying is really technically true. Get the '**I**' out of the way and *jhānas* just happen. It's not 'I can do *jhānas*': *jhānas* just happen when you get out of the way, when you let go and you follow the third noble truth.

For one who experiences *samādhi* there is no need to make resolutions, to choose, or decide, 'Oh, may I see things as they truly are' (*yatā bhūta-ñāṇadassana*): it's a natural process, it happens as an automatic consequence, for one who achieves *samādhi*. You are seeing truly all the insights that come up from the process of meditation which produces *jhāna*. It is blocked by the second noble truth but what produces it is the third noble truth. You are actually experiencing those two noble truths for yourself; you're seeing the heart of them, the meaning of them. You're seeing what the Buddha was pointing to when he talked about those truths: not just ideas but actually seeing what craving is. You're not just having ideas about letting go of craving, not just ideas about what *cāga paṭinissagga mutti anālaya* means, but you've actually done it. You have *cāga-ed*, you've *paṭinissagga-ed*, you've *mutti-ed*, you've *anālaya-ed*, to anglicise those Pāli words. You've done it and that's the result. You've let go and this is the bliss of letting go. This is the reward. You are seeing things as they truly are. That's the reason I get a bit disappointed sometimes when people say, "Oh, Ajahn Brahm just teaches *jhāna*, just teaches *samatha*, he doesn't teach insight practice." That's a ridiculous statement. Anyone who teaches *jhāna*

teaches insight and anyone who teaches insight teaches *jhāna*. The two go together. You're seeing through experience, not just through thinking or theorising.

Experience is worth so much more than any thoughts, ideas, books, or words. The theory and the words are only pointing to the experience that I'm talking about now. You experience these states of deep meditation and then you know what the absence of craving is, because you've seen craving disappear. In the worn old simile of the tadpole in the lake, only when the tadpole grows into a frog and leaves the lake does it know what water is. Only when you've left craving behind do you know what craving is. These are states clearly said by the Buddha to be beyond craving, blindfolding Māra, where Māra cannot go. The Buddha said these *jhāna* states are pregnant with wisdom; wisdom follows naturally. That is why the Buddha said that from *samādhi* you do not need to make resolutions. It happens naturally. That's why after you've emerged from a *jhāna* you don't need to say, 'What shall I do next?' Shut up! Just allow the process to happen. Have faith and confidence in what the Buddha taught. You just go along for the ride and see what happens next.

If it's real insight, *yathā-bhūta-ñāṇanadassana*, seeing things as they truly are, as opposed to seeing things as they seem to be, it only happens when the five hindrances are abandoned, usually after a *jhāna*. When this happens, real insight gives rise to *nibbidā*, the rejection of the world. Seeing things as they truly are one gets *nibbidā*, a distaste for the five senses, negativity towards those things, aversion towards those things. It is the mind disengaging from the five senses when craving has been seen, and letting them go. Seeing things as they truly are! *Saṃsāra* is seen very clearly to be *dukkha* and out of that seeing arises revulsion for the wheel of *saṃsāra*, pushing one off the wheel. It is a beautiful Pāli word *nibbidā*. Basically if you don't know what *nibbidā* is you haven't yet seen things as they truly are! This is part of the process. You can't say, 'Oh, may I experience *nibbidā*. Oh, may I not experience *nibbidā* – I don't want to leave *saṃsāra*, I want to stay for a long time; life is good, life is fine, and it's nice being in the monastery'. *Nibbidā* happens whether you like it or not. It's not part of a self. It's not part of what you want or what you don't want. Those things have to fade away and disappear. If you see things as they truly are that's the reason you can't make any Bodhisatta vows. *Nibbidā* just happens, it

pushes you out of *saṃsāra* whether you like it or not. *'Seeing things as they truly are' is the force that ends rebirth.* You don't need to make any resolutions; it's a natural, automatic process.

Seeing that the world has nothing to hold you, gives rise to *virāga*, the fading away of interest in the world of craving, the letting go of *saṃsāra* and the letting go of the five *khandhas*; including the letting go of consciousness. It's not me letting go of *saṃsāra*, it's not me detaching myself from the world, it's me fading away. It's consciousness fading away, it's all *saṅkhāras*, all *saññās*, all *vedanās*, all bodies fading away, and that leads to the disappearance, *nirodha*, cessation. If someone is fading away they don't need to make a resolution, 'May I fade away? May I cease? May consciousness cease?' You can't make that determination, 'May I cease?' If you did, that's called *vibhava taṇhā*. That's the annihilationist craving, the craving for non-existence; you can't do it that way. Trying to kill oneself, that is annihilate oneself, is impossible, it takes a '**me**' to kill me. It's like trying to eat your head; you can't eat your own head, it's impossible. This is why interest fades away and leads to *nirodha*. This cessation is the ending of everything.

Sometimes people get afraid. It is bleak, thinking of *Nibbāna* as cessation, ending! Whether we like it or not, that's just what happens. We don't have any say in it. So there are no preferences, bleak or not bleak; it's just a word to describe these things, this is just nature. In fact it is only when people have a sense of 'self' that they think it's bleak. You know that beautiful saying in the *suttas*, 'the *Ariyas*, who have seen this, say it is *sukha*, say it is beautiful and happy, but the *puthujjanas*, the ones who haven't see this, say it is *dukkha*, suffering'. What the *Ariyas* say is ultimate bliss, the *puthujjanas* say is bleak. That's the difference between an *Ariya* and a *puthujjana*.

Nirodha leads to *Nibbāna*, cessation, the ending of everything, and it's a natural process. So this whole path of Buddhism is all about non-self. The more you can let go and allow the process to happen and the less you rely upon 'self' – that stubbornness of conceit and ego – the more peaceful, happy, and beautiful this path becomes, and the faster you go to liberation. The Buddha said there are four types of practice, the 'fast and the happy', and the 'fast and the difficult' full of suffering; the

'slow and the happy', and the 'slow and the difficult' full of suffering. Whether it's fast or slow depends on the power of one's *indriyas*. If you've got lots of faith and confidence, which is *saddhā*, you will have lots of energy and you will have lots of mindfulness; *samādhi* will come and wisdom will come. If you've got lots of *saddhā* it's a very fast path but if your cravings, your defilements, especially your illusions of a self, are very strong there will be a lot of suffering. The stronger your perception of self and ego – the '**me**' – the harder this path becomes and the more pain it engenders. So be selfless and let go of this sense of me and mine. Find out that it is only a bubble, it's an illusion that we've allowed to grow in our consciousness. Nothing is stable there! You don't exist – face up to it! It's a great relief; so you've nothing to worry about then. In this way the path becomes happy and fast. Fast into *jhānas*, fast into insight, fast into Enlightenment! It gives you a lot of happiness and bliss to follow that path, but it also gives you all the insights that you read about in the *suttas*. You are following in the footsteps of the Buddha. *The jhānas are the footsteps of the Buddha*.

All these things are to be experienced for yourself. If you get released you find that Enlightenment is possible even in these days, as long as you follow the example of the Buddha. It's in monasteries like this that the Buddha lived; it is practices like this that the Buddha practised. You can check in the *suttas*, and you will find that this is the way. So don't mess around, and don't waste time.

May you all achieve Enlightenment tonight!

7 DHAMMA PRACTICE

10th May 2000

I've been a monk for long time now and the whole purpose of my monastic life is not to build monasteries or to go out and teach. It is to practise Dhamma.

Dhamma is something that we all need to have a feeling for. At the start we think we know what Dhamma is and then with more faith and practice, we develop more wisdom and understanding until finally full penetration of the Dhamma is achieved. Dhamma is *ehipassiko*, it beckons us to 'come and see', and then it keeps leading inwards. It keeps drawing us in. It's one of the amazing qualities of the Dhamma that the more you listen to it the more it draws you in, the more it takes hold of you as the most important thing in life, the most important thing in many lives. You can't resist its invitation to come in, investigate, and get deeper into the Dhamma. That's why it's also called *opanayiko*, it keeps leading us onwards.

The Goal of Dhamma

The more we practise the more we find out about the beauty of the Dhamma, and the release that is in the Dhamma. I call it release because that's how it feels at every step of this path; with every progress that we make in this practice of Buddhism we feel more release from difficulties and burdens. As far as the mind is concerned it gets better and better. With our bodies it gets worse and worse, but we can't do much about that! But at least, if the mind is getting better and better, that gives us something to look forward to in our practice. It's an *opanayiko* practice. It's leading onwards. Where does it lead? It leads onwards into that beautiful peace, that beautiful happiness, the freedom of the mind. It's very important to know that the goal of the Dhamma is freedom.

Often when people get upset and distressed, they come and talk to the monks about their problems and difficulties in life. But with some people, you can see that it's not going to get any better, because they are not practising. They are not following a path that leads to the freedom of the mind. In fact many people are walking a path that is full of entanglements, a path that is going to lead to more problems and difficulties.

You know it is going to happen that way because they are making more complications and more attachments in the world. That's the path that leads to suffering. When people come to see the monks and they are suffering because their husband has died, or their child has died, or they are very upset about something, it makes you question why they have those attachments in the first place. You already have them in this lifetime, but don't do it again. You may want to get married or have relationships, but isn't it enough to look after this body and mind rather than trying to find fulfilment in those things when there is always going to be separation at some stage?

When we understand the Dhamma we understand the practice of letting go, the practice of renunciation. The practice of freeing the body and the mind from the entanglements of the world is a path that is going to lead to more and more happiness, more and more peace, more and more feeling of ease, and to more and more wisdom. That is one of the other aspects of this Dhamma: it is to be seen by every wise person for him or herself. That's *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī.*

I sit up here and teach this Dhamma which you can agree with or not, You can accept it or reject it, because either way it doesn't really matter. The only thing a teacher can ever do is show the way. Whether people want to listen to it or not that's really up to them. I can't apply force. The point is that everyone has to find out for him or herself. So my job is to point it out and encourage you to try it. I have to use as good a sales pitch on *jhāna*, insight, and Enlightenment as I possibly can, because these things *are* possible for human beings. I have to try and encourage everyone that it is possible, that each one of you can achieve this. Once I convince people of that, then people put forth the effort – that's the 'going onwards'. And it *does* create these beautiful states of mind and feelings of freedom. It also creates wisdom. The more one practises the more one understands this mind and this personality with all its hang-ups: all it's seeking for happiness, all its problems of ill will towards itself and towards others. You see all of that as pure craziness. If you have a moment of ill will towards anyone, towards yourself, or towards living, you are crazy. You are insane because you are just hurting yourself; and you are creating misery for your own 'self'.

Opening the Mind to Truth

Adult people look after their own *kamma*. If we get angry at the weather, it's not the weather's fault. If we get angry at the nail because it bends when we try to hammer it into a piece of wood, it's not the nails fault. That is life! Welcome to life. People who argue with life are in denial – denial that things go wrong, denial that they are not in control. People usually say that they are in control. They say life goes the way they want it to go, but that's not the truth of life. By that I mean the world outside, the of weather, trees, nails, and books. That sort of world is completely beyond our power and our control. Even though we have a little ability to manipulate the world, don't get sucked in and think that you are in control. If you do that it's called attachment.

Attachment is what we think we control. When we realise we don't control anything, then we are free from attachments. We can just float and flow rather than be burdened by all these things; this is the wisdom that comes when we meditate. The more we practise the Dhamma, the more we understand. There is a sense of the opening up of the mind to truth. But with that opening of the mind to truth, we have to be very careful because *everyone thinks they are wise*. So many people in this world go around thinking that they are very knowledgeable and smart. Hardly anyone admits that they are foolish.

That's really strange isn't it? Many people who come to the Buddhist Society in town think that they are experts on Buddhism. That's why they come and argue with us sometimes. Maybe they've read a book and then they come and argue with a monk, who has been living the life for thirty years. They really think that they can outwit a monk! So this is it, everyone thinks that they are experts. Why? Because of illusion or delusion. It is something that a person just cannot see; they think they're wise. That's the reason this whole thing about wisdom – what it is and what it isn't – is so difficult to get a handle on.

I've always kept one of the beautiful sayings of the Buddha in mind. The Buddha said to Venerable Upāli, and his foster mother Mahāpājapatī Gotamī, "Whatever *Dhammas* you know lead to *nibbidā*..." This beautiful word *nibbidā* means revulsion from the world, pushing us away from the things of the five senses. It leads to *virāga*;

dispassion or fading away, which leads to *nirodha,* cessation, the ending of things, which leads to *upasama*– this is perhaps the most beautiful term in the list – the peace and tranquillity. This in turn leads to *abhiññā*, a really deep and profound knowledge, which leads to s*ambodhi*, enlightenment knowledge, which leads to *Nibbāna.* "If it leads to those seven things;" the Buddha said, "Upāli, Mahāpājapatī Gotamī, you can know for certain, and be absolutely sure that that is the Dhamma."

That's the teaching of the Buddha; that's wisdom. I always check myself to see that whether what I teach, what wisdom I think I have, produces the goods. Does it lead to *virāga*, the fading away, to cessation, to deep peace, to profound knowledge, Enlightenment, *Nibbāna* ? If it leads to those things it's called wisdom. If it doesn't turn you away from the world, if it just creates more entanglements with the world and you think that the world is a wonderful thing, then it's not *nibbidā.* If you think you can get rid of your attachments and cravings, and then live in this world and have a jolly good time, that's not *nibbidā. Nibbidā* is what sees the problem.

It's not that life out there is suffering; it's 'me' experiencing life as suffering. There is also this dualism of subject and object, and it all comes together as *dukkha*, suffering, the first noble truth. That's how the Buddha became the Buddha, by seeing that truth, seeing that there is no little corner of *saṃsāra* where he could hang out and have a good time. *It's rotten to the core*. That is what the first noble truth means. That truth leads us to *nibbidā.* It leads to a complete turning away from the world. It does not lead to turning away from part of the world and then cherishing another part but to turning away from the *whole* world – turning away from the world outside and also turning away from the world inside.

Once that happens, *nibbidā* automatically leads us to *virāga*, the dispassion towards the things of the world: you don't care what people say about you; you don't care so much about your body, its health or vigour, about the things that you eat, or whether the coffee runs out. What's the big deal? There is always some tea, there is always some water, there is always something to drink. Seeing this one understands *virāga.*

Wisdom leads to dispassion, it leads to the ending, the cessation of things. There are

many people in the world who write big books about Buddhism and many write silly books about Buddhism. There are also people who write the forewords to those books and say what wonderful books they are. It's just silly people supporting each other. None of it seems to lead to *virāga* and *nirodha*, to that peacefulness of mind, the *upasama*. Achieving those peaceful states of mind is a sure sign of wisdom.

Real Peace

If wisdom arises, its whole purpose, its whole job, its whole function, is to alleviate suffering. It's just like taking a pill. If it is the right pill, you take it and the ailment goes or the pain lessens; that's how you know if the pill is suitable for the ailment or not. If it is wisdom and you can spout it around the coffee table, talk to your friends about it, write books about it, but if it doesn't make you peaceful, if it doesn't liberate you from suffering, what's the point of it? In fact it's not really wisdom at all. It's what we call *papañca*, proliferation. It's just conceit. This is why the wisdom that liberates one is the only wisdom that is worthwhile. This is what the *Dhamma* does to you once you really become wise. It leads to peace and tranquillity; it takes you to *jhānas*, to real peace.

People sometimes just don't know what peace is. They think peace is when they can get their own way and do whatever they want in this world. 'Leave me in peace!' What do they mean by 'leave me in peace'? Is it so that they can watch their television, so they can have relationships, and make a lot of money? That's not peace in the world. Real peace is not the peace outside but the peace inside the mind. It is the mind that can be tranquil, that can be silent. It is the beautiful peace in the mind. Sometimes we can hear that peace outside, especially in a quiet monastery like this, on an evening when there is no wind, no rain, when words seem to echo in the silence. That's the beautiful peace that Dhamma leads towards. It's wonderful to be able to turn to the peace of nature, to the quietness of a monastery such as this.

I often turn to the memory of the quietness I experienced in some of the deep caves in which I have meditated, because they really meant something to me in my life as a monk. I have been fortunate to go to places in Thailand where there are forest monasteries up in the hills that have deep caves. I was able to spend hours in those

caves, so dark, so silent, just having wonderful meditations there. That external silence seems to remind me of what I'm supposed to be doing. It seems to be pointing in the direction of the inner silence. That's the reason I taught at the weekend that one of the ways to help one's meditation is to recall, at the very beginning of each meditation, the places or times when one was very quiet. Bring those places and times of tranquillity into the minds eye by using the function of memory. Dwell upon that time when you were tranquil, when the outside world was very still and peaceful. If you can dwell on such a memory you will find that your inner mind will also become tranquil. It's a way of reminding yourself what the goal of all this is. It's about wise peace, the freedom of the mind from all this noise, all this doing, grasping and craving. Once you can bring that into your minds eye at the very beginning of the meditation, it sets the tone and it becomes much easier for you to find your way through the meditation. It makes it easier to find a way through the hindrances and achieve the goal: the great peaceful, blissful states of meditation.

Whenever you get stuck or lose your way in your meditation just remind yourself to bring into the mind the times when you were peaceful, and that will stop the restlessness of the mind. It will stop the doubt; it will stop the wandering mind. As you recall the goal, you remember that the whole purpose of this monastic life, the whole reason behind it, is to see that Dhamma which releases you. This brings that tranquillity, that freedom, which brings peace.

Even though a person may not be Enlightened, or even a Stream Winner yet, there is still something about Enlightenment, the peace of Enlightenment, that they can understand and that gives the whole path a direction. I always remember what this path is all about. What are we here for? We are not here to build the best monastery in the world. We are not here to make beautiful huts. We are not here to have good friends. We are not here to write books. We are not here to become famous as the best Buddhist teacher in Serpentine. We are not here just to make good *kamma. We are here to become liberated, to be free from saṃsāra, to find what the Buddha found.* There is a thing called wisdom, there is a thing called truth, there is a thing called Enlightenment, and that's on offer in this monastery for whoever has the courage to take it up.

What if you make that your goal, and keep it in mind? You know that the goal embraces peace, silence, tranquillity, and freedom. These are all descriptions of *Nibbāna*. You may not be able to describe *Nibbāna* in words but you can feel some of its qualities intuitively. Sometimes you just need to rely upon that. It's something inside you that knows what Enlightenment is all about. There is something inside you that even knows what *jhānas* are all about, because most of you have been monks and nuns many times before. It is reminding you and, once you can bring that goal to mind, it shows you what the Dhamma truly is. It is something that the Buddha said was *sandiṭṭhika*, that which can be experienced in this very life. Not to rely on a belief of what's going to happen in our next life but to experience it now. It's *akālika*, or timeless, that's why we don't need to change the teachings to fit into modern Western culture, whatever that is. The Dhamma of the Buddha, the heart of it all, is literally timeless. It is eternal and for anybody, in any age, in any era, presented clearly and accurately. It will always resonate with people because it's talking about the mind and the body. They might change depending on their genes, the culture might change, but the mind, the heart, doesn't change that much, it's basically the same.

Essentially it's the problem of the 'doer' and the 'knower'. Once one sees this and understands, one understands why the Buddha's teaching is so timeless. One understands how the Dhamma reaches across twenty-five centuries, from ancient India – that strange culture, so different from ours – to our modern society. There is some commonality, something which strikes us, resonates with us as being important, and that's this Dhamma quality. The meaning of the word Dhamma – as the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi so beautifully put it in one of his books (*The Great Discourse on Causation* published by the Buddhist Publication Society) – is looking to the heart of the matter where everything comes from, the source, the essence, the ultimate, the law, the rule behind everything. The *atthā*, the meaning, on the other hand is the consequences of that Dhamma, how that Dhamma works out in the world. But here we are looking at the Dhamma, the heart, the source; this is what wisdom is about. It is about the core, finding that wisdom given by the Buddha. The Buddha gave us a practical path to find this out, he gave instructions, and it's always the case

that if you follow those instructions, they're going to lead to the goal.

Less Choice – More Freedom

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta says this path leads in one direction only; if we continue walking this path we will have to arrive at the goal. It's just a matter of time! That's a powerful saying, a wonderful teaching. The trouble is though, we sometimes get off the path. We don't keep going because we haven't got enough faith, we haven't got enough confidence. However, we should remember that if we keep walking just a little bit further then we find a little bit more happiness. That's the beauty of the path: it's a happy path. At every stage of the path we get a prize, we get more happiness, more peace, and more understanding. That's what makes it a gradual path that leads us on and on and on, *opanayiko*. It doesn't lead us on because we think we understand more; it leads us on because we get more happiness, more peace, more freedom, more joy, and more bliss. This is the great thing about the Dhamma: you don't need to look so far into the distance to gain some benefit or to get a taste of *Nibbāna*.

How can I make myself more peaceful and happy today? How can I let go of more and keep my virtuous conduct pure? Don't break any of the rules or precepts, be more restrained, keep the monastic rules of getting up early in the morning to meditate. Even if you are tired just meditate; it's better than falling asleep. At least by getting up you are doing something, you are creating energy. If you are going to get up, you might as well do it properly by meditating. In the beginning, keeping the monastic rules means giving up so much of what we want to do.

People sometimes ask me, "Why are these rules the way they are?" The purpose of the rules is to stop you having to think. If you had to make up the rules for yourself then there would be more thinking, thinking, thinking. 'We should do this' or 'We shouldn't do that'. The more rules there are, the less choice there is for us. The less choice there is for us, the more freedom we have. The more freedom we have, the more peace we have. Those of you who have to go to the hardware stores now and again to get things for the monastery know what it's like if you have to get different types of nails or different types of screws. When there is too much choice it makes

things really complicated. It's so easy when there is only one thing you have to get.

I really feel for people who live in the world. If they want to get a toothbrush there are a hundred different types to choose from: different styles and different types of bristle or handles. Goodness knows how difficult it is to make choices in this world now, and because there are so many choices, there's less freedom. So it's wonderful when there's not much choice. You know you just have to get up in the morning and that's it. You don't have to think about it. You know you only have to eat what's there. You choose from what's there and that's it. If you had a menu, imagine what it would be like. If instead of having *dāna* we had a supporter who owned a couple of restaurants and they sent the menu out every morning so we could order up whatever we wanted – imagine if I gave you the menu every morning and you had to choose what to eat. It would be terrible having all those choices and decisions to make.

It's very wonderful not having to make decisions. It's nice being on retreat: you don't even put the food into your own bowl; someone else does it for you. I've noticed when I've been on retreat – especially during the rains retreat – how I actually enjoy my food much more because someone else has put it into the bowl for me. I think it is because I don't have to go through all the hassle of choosing. Someone brings the bowl up and I just eat what's there. That's choicelessness. It means more freedom, more happiness, and more peace.

One of the reasons we have all these rules is to give us freedom from having to make decisions and to avoid arguing about what we should do. It's already been arranged and decided, and that makes life so much easier, so much freer. We can use our mind for more important things than deciding what to eat or deciding how to do things. That's also the happiness of hierarchy. When someone else tells you what to do it makes it easier; you don't have to think about it, you just do it. You know what it's like when you get into that complaining mind, 'I don't want to do this. Why does Ajahn Brahm always ask me to clean the toilets? Why can't I do something else?' 'Doesn't he think I can hammer a nail into a piece of wood like anyone else?' 'I only want the really nice jobs.'

It's really strange, but one of the jobs that I really wanted to do once I became a monk

was to dig the earth, to get a spade and just dig into the earth. As soon as I became a novice I couldn't wait to become a monk so that I could stop digging and doing all that sort of stuff! It's was very strange, but I realised that it was because I couldn't do it that I wanted to do it, it was just the perversity of desire. As a monk you don't have to do those things, because it's already decided what you can and can't do, and that's it. That gives a certain sense of peace, a certain sense of happiness, the happiness of the purity of one's precepts. One is letting go of the 'doer', this person who always wants to control and manipulate, who wants to decide what's right and what's wrong, what should be done and what shouldn't be done, blah, blah, blah.

An End to Coming and Going

That 'doer' inside of us creates this critical mind – the judgemental mind, the faultfinding mind – it creates so many problems and difficulties for us. Because of this 'doer' we even judge beautiful people and create enemies out of them. Even the great *Ariyas*, we can hate them and have ill will towards them, criticise them and put them down. It's bad *kamma* to criticise *Ariyas*. Nevertheless because of stupidity, or rather because of the judgemental mind, the mind that is always under the control of this 'doer', we can even criticise the Buddha, even curse the Buddha. That's because this doing mind hasn't really been seen for what it is. It is just a tyrant and a stupid tyrant at that.

The more one meditates and practises restraint through the precepts, restraint of the senses, restraint of the inner commentary, the more one gets into the peaceful states of mind. Then one can see what this thinking mind is all about. After a while you just don't believe it any more. This is the way it goes: it can criticise your best friends, it can love people who are fools, it can praise idiots and find fault with the wise; that is the perversity of the thinking mind. That's why I don't trust it any more. Once you see it for what it is you realise how much trouble it has caused you. So just shut up and be quiet!

In this monastery, people often think that they want to go here or go there, but wherever you go you take 'you' with you. You'll go from one place to another but you will find out that whatever habits and character traits you have here, you'll still have them somewhere else. Whatever obstacles you find here you'll find elsewhere.

'The monks here, or the teacher, are stupid, and you know they are not really up to scratch'. You'll go somewhere else and they'll be the same. That's because you have the same defilements. It's not because of the teacher, it's because of the way you see the teacher. It's not the other monks but the way you see the other monks. It's not the place, it's the way you see that place. You will take this wherever you go until you can be free from all of that.

When I was the second monk in Thailand, many years ago, if people came to me and said they wanted to leave, I would say, "Well if you really want to go, now is not the best time. Because if you really want to leave and you are just following craving, that desire, and those attachments, what you should really do is stay. This is a really great time for gaining wisdom; you can really make a lot of progress towards Enlightenment". When you really want to go that's the time to stay, because when you stay you are going against the stream of the mind – you really want to go but instead you stay and call the mind's bluff. Then you actually win; you have a great victory. It's only a matter of days or weeks or months, it doesn't take that long, and then the desire to go has completely disappeared. You don't want to go any more, and if you don't want to go there's not much point in going. That's the way I tried to keep people in the monastery for long periods of time. It's not a joke, because there is a lot of truth in it. The only time you should go is if you don't really care if you go or not. That's the right time to go because then you are not following your critical, thinking mind. That's *attā*, that's self, that's ego. If you believe in that, that's attachment to all those ideas.

There is a great sense of peace when you surrender, give up, let go, and renounce. Just go according to the Eightfold Path, the path that leads one in the right direction, to *Nibbāna*. Just surrender, give up to it, and patiently wait. If you do that you'll find out it's the right path. You don't have to believe because the more you surrender the more freedom you feel and the more peaceful you feel inside.

Sometimes it feels as if there is a raging tyrant inside, pushing you from pillar to post. How many times have you run away? How many times have you followed that stupid thinking mind? How many times has it led you by the nose, as if you were a stupid cow? Many, many times! And then sometimes you just say, "That's enough, I'm not

going to be led by you, I'll be led by the Dhamma instead, led by the Eightfold path. That is what I'm going to do. That's it!"

I made a determination when I was a young monk that I would never leave any monastery unless I was asked to go somewhere else or because of my conduct, I was asked to get out. I have never asked to leave or go anywhere. I've kept that resolution for all these years, and I've been a monk now for over twenty-five years. I only came to Australia because I was sent over here by my teacher and I only ever go anywhere because I am asked to go. I recommend that practise to any of you who have got the courage to keep it. It's a hard practice; it takes a lot of trust, a lot of confidence, a lot of courage.

But it's a beautiful practise to do. What it means is that instead of following your own mind you're surrendering, renouncing, giving up, letting go. You will find meditation becomes easy because that's the very thing that creates meditation: the letting go of the thinking mind, the letting go of the controlling, and the letting go of the manipulating. Isn't that what happens in meditation? You're in one place and you want to go somewhere else. You're with the breath and you want to get to a *nimmitta* or you're with 'present moment awareness' and you want to get something else. There's always that movement, that wanting something else, that wanting to be somewhere else. It's the coming and going called restlessness.

One of the stories that I remember from Zen Buddhism was when Lin-Chi, the founder of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, had just been to another monastery and returned to pay his respects to his teacher. The teacher replied by punching him in the stomach, so you are very lucky this is not a Zen monastery. I remember the teacher said to Lin-Chi, "When is there going to be an end to all this coming and going?" If you've just come back from another monastery, when is there going to be an end to all this coming and going? What is coming and going? Coming and going, going and coming – you should be fed up with it after a while.

So, it's nice to be able to make an end to all the coming and going in the mind – coming from this state of mind to another state of mind. Just shut up, give up, let go

and surrender to the path. Surrender to watching the breath; surrender to *ānāpānasati*. "Too hot, too cold!" "Too early, too late!" "I've been working all day, I'm too tired!" Shut up! Just watch the breath. I love doing that because I've got a rebellious nature inside me. It must be from growing up in the sixties.

It's amazing what happens when you rebel against what should be happening, against being too tired, too hot, too cold, or too sick. You'll prove to yourself that you can do meditation whenever you want. In the middle of the night when you wake up and you've only had an hour's sleep, you can get up and meditate and get into a nice meditation even though you thought you wouldn't be able to. You've been working all day – sit down and get into a *jhāna*. You're really sick with a fever, even lying on your side – watch the breath and get into a *jhāna*. You can do that. When that happens it proves you cannot trust the seeking mind but that you can trust the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the *Ariya* Saṅgha. This is what we mean by going for refuge to the Triple Gem. It means we find that we can let go whenever we want. That's what meditation is: abandoning, letting go of the controller, letting go of the doer, being content, and allowing peacefulness to grow in the mind.

We'll never get peaceful by coming and going, we only get peaceful by staying still. 'Staying still', 'not coming and going', that's a metaphor for not doing so many things. Simplify your life, make it as simple as possible, so that you don't have much to look after. See if you can unburden the mind, simplify the mind so that you don't have much to think about. Just stay with the breath; make it your friend and just be with it until it becomes so peaceful and beautiful. When it's peaceful and beautiful you know that is wisdom. It's wisdom that leads to things like *upasama*, calmness and tranquillity. The Buddha told Upāli and Mahāpājapatī Gotamī, that if something leads to *upasama*, then that is the Dhamma.

That's the teaching of all the Buddha's. So if it leads to peace you know you are on the right track. If it leads to restlessness, if it leads to irritation, if it leads to ill will, or to a fault finding mind, then you know you're going in the wrong direction. Don't follow that direction; it's going to lead to more suffering for you, stopping you from enjoying the fruits of the path. So understand that the Dhamma is that which leads to

wisdom. And you know it's wisdom if it leads to peace. You know it's peace because it shuts up the doing, thinking mind, and there is contentment. That's the reason this path leads to more and more contentment. If you follow the path, if you follow virtue, it leads to contentment.

Freedom

You are so content keeping eight precepts, and then all the precepts of a novice or a monk. You're so content having no money, not having to deal with that any more. So content not having a wife, children, or parents. So content just being alone, free from all those burdens. So content just with the precepts of a monk, content to be free, because these beautiful rules free you from all of those entanglements. Free because this mind has completely let go of this world, with all its problems and difficulties. Free because you can dwell in the present moment whenever you like. You can drop everything. Free because you can drop the body and dwell in the *jhānas*. Free because you know that life, *saṃsāra*, is limited.

These are the freedoms of the Buddha. These are the freedoms available to each one of you, the peace and the wisdom that gives you great joy and happiness. That's what this monastic life is all about, that's what Buddhism is all about. So please remember what the path is, what the goal is, and just check yourself to see if you're following a wrong path that is creating attachments, ill will, irritation, and activity or whatever. If you know you are walking in the wrong direction, change. It's really up to you.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS IN BUDDHISM

Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre

9th June 2000

I have just returned this afternoon from a three-week trip to Malaysia and Singapore. It was an exhilarating and inspiring trip. I gave many Dhamma teachings and also attended a Buddhist conference. When I gave the talk there were two 'Black Marias' full of riot police stationed outside the venue in the CBD in Singapore. I gave the talk to a very large crowd of over a thousand people in one of the auditoriums. So here in Dhammaloka I feel I'm with a nice cosy group of friends. I actually found out later on – and I was quite disappointed – that the riot police weren't there for my talk but for a 'karaoke bar' and night club next door. It would have been something if I could have put in my biography that so many people attended one of my talks the authorities had to station riot police outside.

It was wonderful to see so many people interested in learning about meditation and listening to the Dhamma. Actually, it shows that in those countries – Malaysia has something like a twenty-six percent Buddhist population and Singapore around forty-five percent – they are very short of good teachers. They need good teachers to teach Buddhism in a way that makes sense and is relevant to human life in a profound way. Not telling people what they already know but challenging them to find a deeper, more accurate way of looking at life. And the Dhamma must be entertaining, especially in places like Malaysia and Singapore were the people are so stressed out. The last thing they want is a lecture. They want a little fun now and again, with a little bit of Dhamma in between. That's my style.

I also attended the 'First Global Conference on Buddhism' in order to see other ideas in Buddhism, to widen my own perspective on the Buddha's teachings and also to participate and give some input on the West Australian experience of Buddhism. The tradition at this Buddhist Centre is Ajahn Chah's forest tradition. It's a tradition that is extremely vibrant all over the world.

I would like to talk this evening about a topic that was presented at that conference by one of the speakers, a professor in Buddhist studies from England, '*The Relevance of Human Rights to Buddhism*'. It was only a twenty-minute presentation but it struck a chord with me because about two years ago someone asked me if I could give a talk on that subject. Because of one thing or another – I was going overseas or teaching a retreat or something – I never got around to it. What's the relevance of human rights to Buddhism? This is a very important subject. It is something many people talk about. It gives them a direction, whether for good or for bad. So I thought this would be a good opportunity, while it's fresh in my mind, to talk about Buddhism and human rights.

Rights and Freedoms

One of the things that really impressed me with the talk I heard at the conference was that the whole idea of human rights is a very Western idea. It basically comes from the Judaeo-Christian culture. In many places, especially in the East, people have a lot of trouble with human rights. Not so much in its fairness and the role of justicel, but in what underpins it. Where does it come from? Why human rights? Without an understanding of the underlying theory behind human rights, it sometimes doesn't make much sense. For example, when I reflect on the principles and work out the consequences, I am amused by the human right that 'everyone is born equal'. That might be so according to Christianity or Judaism but it certainly isn't correct according to Buddhism.

So far as Buddhists are concerned, we are not all born equal. Some people are born big, some people are born small. Some people are born intelligent, some people are born stupid. The point is we come into this world with our *kamma* from past lives. So, straight away – for a Buddhist – that principle of equality at birth doesn't make sense. Even as a young man it never made sense to me. I could see that when people were born they certainly were not equal. This is just an idea. Even though it is a noble idea it isn't true. Throughout my life as a monk I've always preferred truth. What 'actually is' to what 'I would like it to be'. Idealism has its place but surely it must be founded on truth and reality. Otherwise we are just building a fantasy that

doesn't really have any meaning or any solid foundation in the reality of our lives. Isn't it true that each one of you came into this world with advantages over some people and disadvantaged compared to others? It's called the law of *kamma*.

The other thing that doesn't make sense in the Western idea of human rights is the whole idea of freedom. So often our societies – especially in the Western world – celebrate this idea of freedom, and we think we live in the so-called free world. Governments and societies are trying to enshrine that idea of freedom into different societies but basically I don't think they know what the word means. Because of that they get into so much trouble and difficulty and create a lot of mischief for society; just as we do in our own little societies and in the home. We know what the rights and freedoms in our society are, but what does that freedom mean? When you start to apply the law of *kamma* to this idea of human rights and freedoms there are some things that don't make sense.

What I've seen in the world is that people want the freedom of desire. They want to be free to express their desire. free to follow their desires at whatever cost. What Buddhism wants, what Buddhism celebrates, is not the freedom *of* desire, but freedom *from* desire. That's going in a completely different direction.

One of the stories I told at the conference was the story of the 'Wishing Game'. Five children were playing this Wishing Game. The first one was asked, "If you had a wish what would you want" and the child said, "If I had a wish I would want an ice cream." She liked ice cream. The second child who was a little bit older said, "If I had a wish I'd wish for an ice cream factory." The first child thought that was really clever because if you had an ice cream factory you could get an ice cream whenever you wanted one. Not just one ice cream but hundreds of ice creams. The third child was asked, "What's your wish" and he said, "I'd like a billion dollars. Because with a billion dollars I can buy an ice cream factory, a cake factory, a fish and chip shop or whatever else I want, and I could do a lot more". The first two kids thought, 'wow! Aren't we stupid? Why didn't we have think of that?' They thought that this young fellow who wished for a billion dollars was a genius. But the next child when asked

what he wished did even better than wanting a billion dollars, he said, "I wish I had three wishes, so that I could wish for an ice cream factory with my first wish, a billion dollars with my second wish, and with my third wish I could wish for another three wishes." They thought, 'wow! You can't do better than that.' Can you think of a wish that is even better than that – to have three wishes and the third wish is that you can wish for another three wishes? But the last child did surpass that, he was the Buddha to be, and said, "I wish I had no wishes."

Isn't that interesting? Because when you have no more wishes it means that you are completely content. You're free from all desires. You're free from all that wanting. You're free from all feeling of lack, the feeling that somewhere in your life, somewhere in your body, somewhere in your mind, something is missing. Imagine what it would be like if you had no more wishes, completely happy with whatever comes along, completely happy with this present moment. You don't wish for it to be anything else. You look at your husband and he's absolutely perfect. You don't wish him to change at all. You look at your wife and she's so beautiful. You don't wish her to be anything different, neither better nor worse. No more wishing is going against the grain of modern society isn't it? We want to have the freedom to have more wishes. We want the freedom to have more choices and more money to express our choices. We want more freedom to express our individuality.

Buddhism says the cleverest child is the child who wishes for no more wishes. So, the freedoms that people celebrate and enshrine in such documents as the Declaration of Human Rights, are basically the freedom to follow desire. I remember reading in one of the great philosophical cartoon strips, 'Calvin and Hobbs', about an American boy who had just learned from his teacher that ignorance is bliss. He knew it was guaranteed by the American constitution that you had the right to the pursuit of happiness. So he added the two together and said, "If I'm guaranteed my right to pursue happiness and ignorance is bliss, why am I going to school?" It's strange, isn't it, what we talk about as freedoms in the world.

Freedom of Expression

These things are not freedoms, they actually imprison you. For instance, consider the freedom to express yourself. Do you actually feel free when you've got so much choice? When you go into the supermarket or into the shops, there is so much choice. When there is so much choice it can make life so difficult. Wasn't it lovely when there was only one brand of muesli? It was good enough, you quite enjoyed it; but now you've got a choice between so many different brands. That's the problem with freedom. It's just so complicated, so troublesome for the mind. Sometimes freedom just gives you a headache. What brand should I take? I'm challenging you here. The whole idea of these talks is to make you look at things in different ways. Buddhism gives you a different perspective on things. That's half the job of mindfulness, to open up different ways of looking, different ways of seeing, and different ways of practising.

So, instead of actually looking at freedom as the freedom to indulge desire, maybe we should aim for and aspire towards freedom from desire. A Buddhist declaration of human rights would be very different from the human rights that people celebrate in the world. They call it the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but I don't think that they consulted Buddhists or anybody else for that matter. They just call it universal because it sounds universal to them. It's completely dogmatic and insensitive at times. Obviously with human rights there are some things that all people would want to recognise as worth protecting. The aim of human rights is to protect. All people want freedom from oppression and freedom from being treated unfairly.

We do need regulations and laws to protect the weak from the strong. I think one of the goals of a declaration of human rights is to protect the so called 'level playing fields'. This is not only to protect freedom of expression, of speech, but to protect religious expression as well. I was quiet surprised in Singapore and Malaysia to find that Buddhists were afraid to express their religion openly. I expected it in Malaysia, because it's a Muslim country. Buddhists there are very afraid to express their religion, especially when it comes to the point of building temples. They are afraid to say exactly what they are doing because they would never be given building permits

or be allowed to actually practise. In one place where they are building, they plan to plant trees on the edge of the property so that no one will be able see what is happening inside, because the Malays might be upset and stop them. Sometimes they don't even have a Buddha statue. One meditation centre I went to was officially an estate manager's because, if they called it a meditation centre, they would be closed down.

I had expected that in Malaysia but I was surprised that they were hypersensitive even in Singapore to what was going on. I took part in a three-hour talk-back radio show in Singapore. It was really good fun. But the presenter told me beforehand not to mention Buddhism or the word meditation. Otherwise he'd get the sack! Because the people are so hypersensitive, you couldn't really express who you were. The organisers of the conference that I attended really thought that the riot police and the two 'Black Marias' – that I mentioned earlier – were from the government. So many people in the government in Singapore are heavy evangelical Christians that the organizers were afraid because so many people were going to a Buddhist lecture.

When we consider human rights or the idea of freedom, we see that there are some things that should be done. Giving people freedom to choose, especially their religion and allowing people to express their religion, is one example. We should not be brainwashing people. I heard today that someone has bought the lease of a powerful transmitter in the Northern Territory and is blasting Christian propaganda across South East Asia. That's not going to make us many friends in the Muslim world. It's a silly thing to do. When pursuing human rights and freedom we have to be very mindful and have loving kindness, compassion, and sensitivity to the people around us.

In Buddhism it's not freedom for freedoms sake. I can't go and do just whatever I want or preach Buddhism to anybody I see. That was one of the reasons I was personally very impressed with Buddhism. The Buddhist monks and teachers I knew weren't ramming Buddhism down my throat. They weren't telling me that if I did not believe in Buddhism I would go to hell. That happens in some religions! People have

told me in Malaysia and Singapore that sometimes their children come home from school very upset, because the teachers tell them that their mummy and daddy are going to go to hell because they are Buddhists.

That is really too much. So I told the Buddhists, even in Malaysia, to stand up for themselves. If any Christian comes and tells you the Buddha wasn't God, he wasn't even a prophet, he was just an ordinary man, say, "Hang on, that's only partly true! It's true the Buddha wasn't a god. It's true he wasn't a prophet or a Son of God, but he *was* the teacher of God. The place of the Buddha in the scheme of things according to the *suttas*, according to the actual teachings of the Buddha in the Scriptures, is that our Buddha is your God's teacher". That's true! In Pāli *satthā devamanussānaṃ*, means the teacher of gods and men. That is in the chant that you did if you were doing the *pūjā* (devotional offerings) at seven o'clock:

Itipi so Bhagavā Arahaṃ sammāsambuddho

Vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū

Anuttaro purisadammasārathi satthā devamanussānaṃ.

Satthā means 'teacher', *devamanussānaṃ* means of gods and men, there are many places in the *suttas* where it is recorded that the Buddha went up to heaven to see Brahma and taught him the Dhamma.

One of those exchanges is in the Brahmanimantaṇika Sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya (MN 49). The Buddha went to see Brahma by using his psychic powers, but one of the attendants in Brahmas assembly said, "Do you know this is Brahma! You should go and bow down to him; he is God, the almighty, the creator, etc. etc. etc." The Buddha replied, "No way, Brahma is making a big mistake." He tried to teach Brahma that he was subject to the law of *kamma* and subject to the law of impermanence, and that he had come to his present state from another world. Brahma was actually born into his role. The role of God, of Brahma, is just a job, a position which falls vacant at the end of the universe. Someone else gets it next time. That's the Buddhist teaching. Of course Brahma didn't believe him. The only thing that eventually convinced Brahma was a psychic contest. Brahma said, "Look, I can

vanish, and you won't be able to find me", and the Buddha denied this. According to the *sutta* the god tried to vanish but wherever Brahma went the Buddha followed. I think that is because Brahma lives in the highest of the sensory realms and he can go from there into the first *jhāna* realm. But when the Buddha went into the second *jhāna* realm that was beyond Brahma's conception and experience, he couldn't find the Buddha. The Buddha won the psychic contest and, because of that, Brahma realised that this was no ordinary person and started to listen and understand the laws of impermanence. He understood that he wasn't a permanent being in this universe. He wasn't the almighty, the permanent, etc. He understood he was just like any other being, subject to the law of *kamma*, subject to impermanence. That was when Brahma became a disciple of the Buddha.

So, if anyone knocks on your door and asks if you believe in God, you can say, "Yes, but we also believe in the Buddha and that the Buddha is your God's teacher". That way you will get rid of them pretty quickly. Only say this if they get heavy with you because we want to be diplomatic. We want to be kind, but sometimes it's worth fighting fire with fire. Buddhists should at least stand up for their beliefs, understand what their beliefs are, and not just be wimps.

Freedom of Inquiry

I spoke in Malaysia about such things as the Gnostic gospels, which is another tradition of Christianity. In early Christianity there were three strands of Christian belief. One was the church at Jerusalem, which was basically a Jewish Christianity. They were still circumcising each other and keeping the Jewish traditions. It wasn't very popular with the Gentiles in Rome because they didn't have anaesthetic in those days. The Gentile church was found in many other centres outside of Jerusalem. Places like Antioch, Corinth, and Rome. Then there were the Gnostic Christians. They weren't centred anywhere but were an independent strand of Christianity with no hierarchy or organisation but with groups of people meeting in many different places.

When Jerusalem fell in 70AD, because the Romans were – for one reason or another – fed up with the Jewish people, they tore down the temple and dispersed the people. This action destroyed the Jewish Christian church and from then on it was a contest between the Gnostic Christians and the much better organised, more powerful, Roman Christians. Little by little – this is just basic history not Ajahn Brahm making it up – the Gnostic Christians were suppressed, considered heretics, and eventually annihilated by the Roman Christians. They were killed, their books were burned, and their libraries were destroyed.

It's strange but when you try and suppress anything, when you try and hide something, especially bad *kamma* or mistakes, it usually turns up again somewhere! In 1945 somebody, in a place called Nag Hammadi in southern Egypt, found some old texts, old papyrus manuscripts, dating I think to the first and second centuries AD, which came to be called the Gnostic Gospels. They can be seen at the Nag Hammadi Library. In these texts there are actual sayings of Jesus Christ that are very, very different from what we read in the Bible. If you are interested in another form of Christianity it's very interesting to read things that give a different slant to that religion. You can look up a book called 'The Gnostic Gospels' by Elaine Pagels, who is professor of Religious Studies at Princetown University in America. The reason I'm saying this is because one of the teachings in the texts quotes Jesus as saying that God was in his heaven one day saying, "I am the first born, the creator, the lord of all that is and ever was, the most powerful, etc., etc.". Then someone says, "No you're not. Don't get above yourself God. There are other beings in this universe which you simply do not know about." God replied, "Who said that? Why are you saying that?" That is in the Gnostic Christian Gospels, which puts God in a very different place from that depicted in Roman Christianity.

I mention this because when we have more knowledge and understanding, when we have more information, we get a much wider and broader picture of things. It's that wider knowledge that is one of the things that should be a basic freedom for all human beings. Knowledge should be freely available. It shouldn't be slanted or biased according to certain people's views or religion's agendas.

There are some freedoms that we love to have, that are really our right. One of those freedoms that we would certainly put in a Buddhist charter of human rights is the right to freedom of inquiry, freedom of information, and freedom to question. It is by questioning that we find the truth. The Buddha encouraged us not to just sit back and listen, or to only take a book and study it, but to also question. One of the *suttas* lists the five things that help one become a Stream Winner, (the first stage of Enlightenment). It starts off with *sīla*, virtue, morality, keeping precepts and continues with these two beautiful words *suta* and *sākacchā*. *Suta* means literally 'listening to Dhamma discourses'. You might call it learning or having the informational input about the Buddha's teachings. *Sākacchā* means 'discussion and asking questions'. The other two factors, interestingly, are *samatha* and *vipassanā,* calm and insight. These are the five supporting factors for the arising of Enlightenment. Here I'm just focussing on *sutta* and *sākacchā*, the ability to have the information and also to discuss it.

One of the things that really attracted me to Buddhism was that I could ask any question, even though they were sometimes silly questions, because the teachers respected and honoured questioning. Those teachers would never make a questioner feel silly or embarrassed by saying, "What a stupid question that is, you foolish person. Don't ask that question again." I've tried all my life never to do that. If someone asks me a question, even though I sometimes think, "What a dumb question, haven't you been listening?" I always try to answer it fully. I've had some dumb questions in my time. Probably the hardest and most foolish question I was ever asked was when I was giving a talk, many years ago, to fourteen year old girls in a high school. After my talk on Buddhism, I expected the questions to be on Buddhism, but this one girl put her hand up and asked, "Do girls turn you on?" That was a hard one to handle. Whenever I asked a dumb question – although I never asked questions like that of monks!! – the monk would always be very patient with me and would actually explain very gently saying, "Look, you're misunderstanding; you should have asked the question in this way". But they would never make you feel small because you had asked a stupid question. I really appreciated that because it showed a sense of kindness and respect. The teacher respected the student.

To question is a right for people. That's why I say, "Whatever question you have, come and ask it. I may not know the answer. It may take me a while, and sometimes you may not be satisfied with my answer, but always ask the question". Often when people ask questions and I reply, I ask them if the answer is okay. "Did I answer the question satisfactorily?" "Did I understand the question?" That's respect for the person who had the guts to put their hand up and ask.

I act like this because of my own past experience. Sometimes I've asked a question and because the person hasn't really understood it, or because the question is simply a bit too hard for them, or it's showing them they've made a mistake, they skirt around it or make a joke of it. I remember Krishnamurti, the teacher – I was quite interested in his teachings for a while. Later I heard a recording of one his talks given in the New York Library. It was quite a famous talk. I've seen the audio cassette in public libraries. I was really interested in the talk and at the end there were a lot of stupid questions. Krishnamurti answered those questions reasonably well, but then someone asked a really good question, which was very deep and challenged much of what he had said. I was disgusted when the answer was, with a very condescending and superior voice, "Do I have to answer everything?" The audience laughed. But this poor man was ridiculed even though it was the best question of the session. Krishnamurti just skirted around it with humour, and I thought that was really wrong.

I tell people that if lecturers at universities really know their stuff, if they are really experts at their subjects, they can answer any questions. If they skirt around questions or are afraid of questions, it's a good sign that they don't know what they are talking about. I told the people in Malaysia and Singapore, and I give the same advice to you: there are so many teachers and Gurus, monks and nuns and goodness knows whatever, floating around the world today; you should ask them difficult questions. That's the only way to find out if they know their stuff. Ask them the hardest questions, the most probing questions, and see if they answer them with a sense of equanimity, with a sense of respect – not like a politician avoiding the issue but like someone who knows what they are talking about. If you know, you are not afraid of

questions. This is a good way for people to check on teachers, on Gurus, on monks, or nuns who go around the world teaching. There is a huge danger in believing charlatans. So ask deep questions.

I think in any charter of Buddhist human rights we should have the right to question anybody and the right to demand a fair answer, whether it's from politicians, preachers, or whoever, because I think that would protect truth, and access to the truth should be an inalienable right for people, an inalienable right for all. Find out what your governments are doing. Find out what your doctor says about you, what they have diagnosed you as having. But especially in religion we should have the freedom to find out the truth.

Defining the Boundaries

We also need some checks and balances, because we need boundaries for everybody. Sometimes when we don't understand the meaning of freedom, we remove all the boundaries, whether in the practice of religion, or in the practice of education. Whether it's living together as a family or just in general life, we don't put boundaries in place because we think freedom means 'no boundaries'. We get into all sorts of confusion. In fact one of the speakers at this conference, who I didn't really respect, said she was a Buddhist without boundaries. I was not at all inspired by her. Why do you even call yourself a Buddhist if you don't have any boundaries? To be a Buddhist you've got to have boundaries. I accept some statements and ideas but not others, otherwise why call yourself a Buddhist. Why not call yourself a Buddhist-Christian-Jewish-Moslem-Atheist-freethinker? That's not having boundaries. The point is, it's good to have boundaries.

Sometimes people say, "I'm not anything, I don't call myself a Buddhist. If you're a Buddhist, that's just being attached to a label, to a name". I ask them, "Are you a man? Are you a woman? Aren't you just attached to that label? If you are not attached to that label, when you go to the toilet which one do you go to, the 'Men's' or the 'Ladies?" If you are not attached to being a man go to the ladies toilet and see what happens. You can see what intellectual garbage this is. I sometimes get really

embarrassed by my fellow Buddhists. Tina Turner when asked by a reporter, "Why are you a Buddhist?' replied, "Because as a Buddhist I can do anything I like". That's not being a Buddhist. Buddhists have boundaries. Creatures have boundaries, and it's the boundaries that define who you are. You call yourself a man, because that means you are not a woman, you're not an animal, and you're not a *deva*. You are a man. If you call yourself a Buddhist it defines you as a Buddhist. Whether it's Tibetan, Mahāyāna, Theravāda, Zen, or whatever, there are certain things that those labels require. At least you have got to believe that the Buddha was Enlightened. If you think, "Well I don't know if the Buddha was enlightened or not. Sometimes I believe in the Buddha but sometimes I believe in Jesus Christ, and sometimes I believe in the Great White Ram!" What sort of Buddhist is that? That's just a person who is incredibly confused. They are never going to get anywhere in this life. If you're going to go to Fremantle you've got to get on a bus that has Fremantle written on the front otherwise you will never get there. You don't have to go to Fremantle, you can go to South Perth, or you can go to Wanneroo, but at least choose the right bus and just sit on it until you get there.

If you are a Buddhist you should learn what the Buddha really said and what it means to be a Buddhist. But not just according to your own ideas. Buddhist means 'of the Buddha', 'something to do with the Buddha'. The Buddha was a historical person. Everyone, even atheist sceptics, accept that much. The Buddha lived in India twenty-six centuries ago, and there is a lot written about him. Not just in old books but also in stone, in actual carvings on ancient temples. There are also carvings on stone pillars erected by the Emperor Asoka. The Buddha existed, there's no doubt about that. With some of the other teachers we're not quite so sure.

You have to know what it was that the Buddha taught to be a Buddhist. You have to have some degree of faith and confidence in those teachings. They have to make sense to you. The reason I became a Buddhist was because I read a book about Buddhism that made sense to me. I read other books at the same time, the Koran and the Bible. They didn't make so much sense. By saying you are a Buddhist you are not criticising other religions, you are saying what *you* are. In the same way as being

a woman, you say you are a woman. You are not criticising men, you are just describing yourself. This is clear thinking. You are giving yourself a description that describes your reality at that particular time. With that description you take on the responsibilities and duties of that reality. A Buddhist is someone who believes in the Buddha – in other words someone who follows, as best they can, what the Buddha taught. Some Buddhists perform all of sorts of elaborate acts of worship. We talked about this in Malaysia where they call it 'joss-stick Buddhism'. You might have seen joss-stick Buddhists they hold these joss sticks in their hands and sway backwards and forwards. They haven't a clue why they are doing this. They go backwards and forwards like this because they have always seen their parents and their grand parents doing it. Then they put the joss-sticks into a jar. That's not what the Buddha taught.

The Buddha taught that if you want to worship him – and this is in the Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta (DN 16) – you should follow his advice. A Buddhist is really someone who has gone for refuge to the Buddha and is practising the Eightfold Path as closely as possible. Whether it's Zen Buddhism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, or whatever type of Buddhism, the one thing in Buddhism that everyone has in common is the Eightfold Path. In Mahāyāna Buddhism they've got six *pāramīs*, or perfections, three of those are *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, which is the eightfold path. No matter what form of Buddhism it is, you have to have *sīla*, virtue. You have to have right view and keep the precepts. You have to have *samādhi*, where you are practising some meditation and developing some *paññā* or wisdom.

So, first of all learn what the Buddha taught. Try and realize it. See if it makes sense or not, and in the meantime question it. Listen to find out what Buddhism is all about. Question it to make sure you understand properly what the Buddha said, not believing it yet. Then try it out to see if it works by practising it for yourself.

Freedom of Mind

Sometimes people think that keeping rules and having laws is restricting their freedom. That's why some human rights conflict with the laws. There is a conflict in

many countries between laws which are designed to protect society and to give freedom from bullying, freedom from disruption, freedom for a person to enjoy their property, their time, and their own religion, and what people call the 'freedom to do what they want'. I think this is the problem with the way that human rights are espoused at the present time. In Buddhism we realise – and the Buddha said this – that we gain freedom only within boundaries. We gain a lot of confusion, pain, and suffering, when we don't have boundaries. Look at your marriage. If you've no boundaries, no rules, what sort of marriage have you got? The husband if he likes a girl can just go there, be free; and the same for wife. What sort of life would that be? To be able to have harmony and peace we do need rules.

During my talks in Singapore and Malaysia I gave the simile of the fish in a tank – are they free or are they in prison? Is it 'Buddhist' to put fish in a tank or should they be swimming free in the seas, the lakes, and the rivers? What have they done to get put in prison? Sometimes people look at the aquarium and think it's a prison, don't they? But that's misunderstanding freedom. The meaning of that particular simile is that the fish in the tank are free from fishermen, free from bigger fish, and they are free from too much cold and too much heat. The temperature is controlled and they've got free medical care because, if they are sick, the owner will come and see them and make sure they are okay. They get free food delivered to them once a day. Fast food: they don't even have to ring up for the delivery boy, it just comes to them! The fish in the tank are free from so many problems. That's why, when I really think about it, if I was a fish I'd rather be a fish in an aquarium than a fish in the sea or in the ocean, in the rivers or lakes. I can swim back and forth, I wouldn't be able to go as far as other fish but I would be so happy. I wouldn't have to worry about anything. I'd be just sitting in the corner of the aquarium with my fins crossed meditating quite happily!

Now you may understand monks. We put ourselves in a monastery with a large wall around it and people bring us food every day just like a fish in an aquarium. But to live that life we have to put boundaries around ourselves. Our boundaries are all the rules of discipline which we have to keep. This is something that people don't understand about monks and nuns, especially the lady who said she was a Buddhist without boundaries. Without boundaries there's no freedom at all. In fact people who try that, who indulge in whatever pleasure or sensory aberration they like, who sleep

around with this partner and that partner, get so confused, so depressed. We used to call these people 'screwed up' in their minds. That is no inner freedom whatsoever. There is just so much pain. That's the reason that places like California – I'm not sure if it's true, but I think it's pretty accurate – probably have the highest ratio of psychotherapists per unit of population of anywhere in the world. One of the reasons for that is that there is a lack of freedom of mind.

So freedom really needs boundaries. If we keep precepts we feel free. The more precepts we keep the more free we feel. It's the same with meditation. Some people say meditation is so hard – you have to think of the breath but you don't want to think of the breath, you want to think about your dinner this evening. If you think of the breath isn't that just another prison? That's why people sometimes even have the nerve to say that you can be attached to meditation. They really don't know the difference between freedom and attachment, between liberty and being in a prison. If you watch the breath and just keep yourself on the breath, you don't go anywhere else. If you put yourself in a jail with iron bars around the breath, you can't go anywhere. Do that for twenty minutes, half an hour, or an hour and you feel so much bliss, the mind actually feels free. That is one of the fascinating insights of Buddhism. In fact the Buddha called those states the 'states of *vimutti* ' and that literally means freedom or liberation of the mind.

It's strange but you have to put yourself into only one small part of the present moment to gain liberation of the mind. You can't even talk, that's against the rules. Imagine trying to impose that on people! On meditation retreats we impose 'noble silence' and only allow people to eat in the mornings. If Amnesty International found out about our meditation retreats they'd probably complain. That's what is called unusual punishment, unusual forms of torture. I would think they would have a strong case for banning it. People who go to those retreats at first, because they can't talk, feel so uncomfortable. But after two or three days the discomfort disappears and they actually feel freedom. They are free from the necessity of having to talk and having to relate to people on that level. They learn how to relate on another level. There is so much freedom when you're silent, so much more freedom when you stay on one point. What looks like a prison is actually the fullest liberty. It's called release, and it's the wisdom that is the truth.

It's a very narrow truth. The truth of Buddhism is 'impermanence', 'suffering' and 'non-self'. People often think that's such a small thing. Why believe that? You're just attached to one way of looking at things. Some people say that that's being attached to one view and real freedom is having any view, any view you like. You can believe in impermanence today and believe in permanence the next day. You can believe in God. You can believe in whatever you like. Nothing is right and nothing is wrong. Some philosophers end up by saying that there is no good and there is no bad, it's all relative. They say, in other words, that whatever you like is good, and whatever you don't like is bad. It depends on how you feel; truth is relative. Anyone who believes in absolute truth is dogmatic, just stuck in one way of thinking. But actually the opposite is true. If you have right view, you feel so free. It's not being in a prison; it's liberty. It's okay to say what you think is right and stand up for it.

Conclusion

Don't be a freethinker, which means that you think, think, and think. Be a 'no thinker'. Be a knower, not a thinker. All thinking is a sign that you don't know. If you knew why would you think? It's true, just think about that. So, here I'm putting out some different ideas about Buddhism, ideas that actually show that human rights are a central pillar of our society. They mean a lot to us because they have consequences for the way we live our lives, consequences for the laws of our society, and consequences for the way we do things.

Let us have another look at human rights from a Buddhist perspective, from the perspective of *kamma*. Sometimes we have to suffer. We know why – it's because we deserve it. We caused it! Equality is the equality of opportunity, the opportunity to make good *kamma* and to have happiness. All people are not born equal because they have all started from different places. Equality is in the equality to perform good *kamma* and the equality to rise in happiness and leave suffering behind. So we recognise the differences in people, even from the time of their birth. People are not all born equal, but they should have equality of opportunity, and that's a beautiful thing in Buddhism.

Everyone has the opportunity to make good *kamma*. It doesn't matter how much you are experiencing the results of bad *kamma* at this moment. If you're very sick, very ill, if you've just lost your job, or you're disabled, if you've just been in an accident, a divorce, or whatever else, there is always an equality of opportunity to take hold of your life. You can turn your life around to that which is truly wholesome, beautiful, and good at any stage of your life. You can do that! That's why Buddhism doesn't believe in fate, in the sense that, 'Oh, I'm hopeless. I'm not destined to have a nice life' or 'I can't become a monk', 'I can't become a nun'. In Malaysia people said, "Well, it's alright for you; you were born with such good *kamma*, that's why you're a monk. But I haven't got good *kamma*. I can't become a monk". I ask, "How do you know?" I always tell people to give it a chance and see what happens. Test it out and see if you have good enough *kamma* to become a monk. Give it a try. The point is we can always do something.

One of the other things which impressed me in Buddhism, was that even a person who was a prostitute, someone who went crazy, and a serial killer, were all examples of people who eventually became Enlightened. In Buddhism people with terrible *kamma* had the freedom of opportunity, even in this life, to get to the very highest achievements.

I think it is a good idea to enshrine in human rights not just equality between men and women, but more importantly to enshrine *equality of opportunity*. Opportunity for men should be the same as opportunity for women. It should be the same opportunity for any gender, any race, and any religion, because that is the Buddhist principle – not a Western Christian principle but Buddhist principles. With the Buddhist principle of forgiveness and kindness it is not necessary to enshrine punishment into human rights. Nowadays the victims of crime want to be the ones who punish the criminals. I'm not sure that is the law yet, but it seems to be coming. We seem to be enshrining in law the right to inflict revenge on somebody else, basically the right of an eye for an eye. But that's Judeo-Christian and Islamic; it has no place in Buddhism. In Buddhism we have the right to forgive. It's good to forgive somebody else, but it is also a human right and also freeing to forgive yourself as well. That's a powerful freedom. It took me a long time to change my conditioning on reward and punishment. If you are

guilty you have to be punished! You have to be spanked, or go to your room, go without your dinner, or some other punishment. If you don't get that punishment from someone else you inflict it on yourself. Buddhist human rights are the right to forgive and let go.

These are just some reflections on human rights from a Buddhist perspective. Sometimes we think that the Declaration of Human Rights is universal, applicable to all people in this world, just because it came from America and Europe. I think that America and Europe need to look at the different cultures that make up our world, not just Buddhist culture but also Aboriginal cultures, to make these declarations relevant. Instead of just calling them universal, first of all find out what the people of this world actually feel: consult them, instead of just imposing these ideals that do not have a foundation in all cultures. The speaker at this conference was suggesting, and I thought it was a marvellous idea, that this declaration of human rights is far from perfect. Let the Buddhists have an input. Rework it. Otherwise it's not really applicable and it doesn't make sense to many people. There are different ways of looking at things, and to look at things in different ways is called wisdom.

These are some points on Buddhism and human rights, freedom and everything else. But it's just a start, because the whole debate and investigation isn't over yet.

9 JHĀNA MEDITATION

Fremantle Zendo

21st June 2000

I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to come and speak to you all. This is actually the second time that I speak to the Zen group. I want to talk this evening about something that is of use and benefit to everyone who meditates. This evening's talk is on *jhāna* meditation of the Thai forest tradition, because I thought it would be very useful to everybody here.

The Heart of Buddhist Practice

Everyone would know that the Buddha became Enlightened by sitting under a tree and meditating. Meditation is the heart of Buddhist practice and that which has set it apart from other practices and religions. As far as my historical understanding is concerned, I cannot see that there was any practise of meditation, certainly not any quiet meditation, prior to the time of the Buddha. It's as if he rediscovered this path with meditation at its heart. Even though meditation is mentioned in the Upanishads, my understanding, and that of Indian academics, is that those texts date to after the time of the Buddha. The old Pāli word for meditation was *jhāna*. This is a very important word because as you know, when the Buddhist tradition went to China, *jhāna* became Chan and from Chan we get Zen. So this is the historical context for the roots of meditation.

The way of meditation in the Thai Forest tradition is the way of just 'letting go'. Many people in our world would like to understand how to let go because we have many problems and difficulties, and many attachments. The fundamental teaching of the Buddha is that an attachment to certain things leads to suffering. So we need to understand how to let go of those attachments. We do this through meditation; this is the process of letting go.

One of the first things that impressed me about meditation is that the more you let go, the more happiness comes into your mind. The path of meditation is the path of happiness. In fact the more you smile – I don't know if you are allowed to smile in

the Zendo – but the more you smile the more it's a sign that you understand about the letting go of suffering. Another thing that impressed me in Buddhism was the fact that the Buddhist monks I met were very happy, especially people like Ajahn Chah, my teacher in Thailand. Not only was the teacher happy but also, when I read the *suttas*, I found time and time again that the Buddha was a very happy monk. The people who went to see the Buddha when he was passing through the monasteries, such as the great Jeta Grove Monastery outside Sāvatthī, would always comment on how happy the community, the Saṅgha, looked and how much they smiled.

I said in Singapore recently that the greatest marketing tool for Buddhism is the serene smile of a happy meditator. Because, when a person sees that the practice of meditation gives rise to happiness and the ending of suffering and distress, then they too will want to follow that path. They too will want to share that smile. That certainly is the story of my practise of Buddhism. I went to Thailand for one reason: of all the monks I'd seen in the city of London, where I was born, it was the happy smiling Thai monks who impressed me the most. I thought that if Buddhism was going to give anything, if it was going to work, then the happiness I saw in those monks is what I wanted to share.

Happiness is just the end of suffering and it is that which encourages people to follow the Buddhist path. That happiness is born of letting go and the process of meditation is what generates it. But the happiness and meditation have to be grounded on the ease of the body and a very virtuous lifestyle. I'm sure that everyone would agree with me that it's very difficult to sit meditation in the Zendo, or in a meditation hall of any tradition, if, beforehand, you've been acting unskilfully with your body and speech. What I mean by unskilful is doing something that hurts or harms oneself or another. If one cannot let go of such stupidity, then it's so hard to let go of more refined things, and to develop the peaceful state of meditation.

That's the reason in the Thai Forest tradition, why meditation is grounded on a very pure life style, a lifestyle of harmlessness, a lifestyle of compassion, a lifestyle of the purity of conduct of all the senses. Having achieved that degree of purity, there is a path of letting go in this meditation. You understand from your own experience what

letting go means because when you let go of any obstacle, of any attachment, you experience peace. The sign of letting go is the peace and happiness which arises in the mind. That's why I think many of you would understand that one of the objects of meditation is *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is the ability to sustain the attention on one thing with calmness and stillness.

The Path of 'Letting Go'

However, recently when I went to teach meditation and Buddhism in Malaysia and Singapore there was a syndrome which I had never met before in the Thai Forest tradition. It was what they called '*samādhi* headache'. I don't know if you get Zen headaches, but if you do you are going in the wrong direction. You can imagine yuppies in Malaysia and Singapore, always trying to control and manipulate their lives. When they sat meditation they were controlling and manipulating their meditation as well. That is going in the complete opposite direction to the Buddha's teaching. They were meditating to get somewhere. They were meditating to control their body, control their minds, and they were getting into the tension called '*samādhi* headache'. I told them that I had never heard of this before.

There is something that is important to overcome on the path of meditation. *Jhāna* is the path of letting go more and more. The core teachings of Theravāda are the Four Noble Truths. The second and third ones are what I am going to point to this evening. The second truth is craving, which is the cause of suffering. The third truth is letting go, letting go is the meaning of *Nibbāna*, ultimate happiness. One of the sayings of the Buddha in the *suttas* is, "*Nibbāna* is the highest happiness", and it's that point of happiness which becomes the carrot on this path of meditation. The more you let go the more happiness you have.

The first things that we teach in the Forest tradition are the stages of letting go. Just like any other process, there has to be a methodical stage by stage abandoning: first the coarse things, then the more refined, then the abandoning of the very refined, until you can let go of everything. It is just like a carpenter who is going to make a beautiful piece of furniture. He takes wood from the wood yard and first of all planes it down to get rid of the rough edges and the burrs which are caused by the saw.

Having planed off the rough parts, he uses the coarsest sandpaper, and then medium sandpaper. and then fine sandpaper. After using the finest sandpaper and smoothing the wood as much as possible, he'll finish off with a cloth and some oil or some wax to fine polish this beautiful piece of wood. If you start with the polishing cloth on the rough piece of wood you'll waste a lot of polishing cloths! This is a simile for the letting go procedure.

Abiding in the Present Moment

This was the way that we were taught by some of the great teachers of North East Thailand, and this was the way they practised. They would sit for hours in peace and happiness with a smile on their face, which in turn would give rise to the wisdom in their teachings. The way they did this was first of all to abandon the past and the future and to abide in the present moment. This is such a simple thing, but it is such a valuable thing to do on the path of meditation. No matter what you are focussing your attention on, whether it's on an object or on silence, it's so easy just to linger on the past and think of what happened earlier. The past is just a memory, the future is just a dream, and once you've completely abandoned them you are in the present moment.

During a recent retreat I was talking a lot and I made a slip of the tongue: instead of calling it the 'present moment' I called it the 'pleasant moment'. I didn't mind that slip of the tongue because it was very true. The present moment is very pleasant because you are letting go of so many burdens. As a monk with many duties and responsibilities I abide very often in the present moment. In other words, when I come here I've got no monastery and I've got no Buddhist Society in Nollamara. When I'm here I'm just a monk sitting here in the Zendo. All the past is abandoned, and I don't imagine the future. A good illustration of this comes from a very famous Thai monk who died recently in the South of Thailand. He was building a huge meditation hall in his monastery. When the rainy season came (which in our tradition means we go on retreat for three months and all work is stopped) and the retreat started the roof was only half completed. So when people came and visited that monastery they would ask this great monk, "When is your hall going to be completed?" He looked at them and said "It is finished". They looked back at him saying, "How can you say it's finished? The roof is not finished yet, there are no windows, there are no doors, and it hasn't been painted yet. What do you mean, 'it's

finished'?" He would reply, "What's done is finished". That was a beautiful teaching

This is what you should do just before you meditate: say, "What's done is finished", so you don't take all your so-called unfinished business into your meditation. Please, do not be a person who has to get everything out of the way before you meditate. If you do that you'll find you'll never have the time to meditate. If you try and get everything perfect and tie up all your loose ends, you'll find you'll be dead before you can meditate. Loose ends are the normal state of life, and there is always more work to be done. There is always a mess in the kitchen to clean up. What are you living for – to help to clean the kitchen or to have a peaceful mind? So meditation becomes important or rather the 'present moment' becomes important. What you're doing here is letting go of a lot of business; you're focussing on the only truth you have which is 'here and now'.

Sometimes monks tend to focus so much on the present moment that they sometimes forget what hour it is, what day it is. In my early years as a monk with no responsibilities – and this is no joke – I even forgot what year it was. One day was very much like the next in those monasteries in the jungles of North East Thailand. You had this beautiful feeling of being in the timeless present moment.

Letting go should be your first goal in the meditation. The sign of letting go is freedom. Sometimes people are afraid of freeing themselves. Fear is one of the hindrances to abandonment. We are so attached to our past because it defines us. It's from the past that we have built up our feeling of self, of who we think we are. We are attached to the future because we think if we plan then we'll find some security, some safety.

Some Thai monks tell fortunes and people would sometimes come up to my teacher, Ajahn Chah, this great meditator, and ask him to tell their fortunes. Ajahn Chah would always out of compassion and wisdom agree to do so. He would say to them, "Madam or sir, I'll tell you your fortune. Your future is uncertain." He was always right! So why worry about things that we do not know will happen? How many times have you worried about going to the dentist for example? You worry yourself sick about something you are afraid of and when you get to the dentist, you find he's

got the flu and cancelled your appointment. What a waste of time that is. So it's just wise, it's common sense, especially in the time of meditation, to forget about all the past and the future and to be free in the present moment.

We have a skilful means in the Thai Forest tradition that comes from the time of the Buddha, of using what we call 'mindfulness'. To explain mindfulness, I use the simile of a gatekeeper, who can be like the guard at your house. Some rich people have these guards to make sure that burglars do not get in and steal their goods. And they know that mindfulness is much more than bare attention, because if you tell that gatekeeper to just be mindful, be aware, just watch what's going on, you can imagine what happens. When you go home from the temple, you find that people have burgled your house. You ask the guard, "Weren't you mindful? I told you to guard this house." And the guard says, "Yes, I was mindful. I saw the burglars going in and I saw them going out with your stereo. I watched them go in again and take all your jewels. I was very mindful. I was fully aware all the time." Would you be very happy with that guard? Of course you wouldn't. Remember that this guard 'mindfulness' has a job to do and that job is to abandon, to let go of certain things. You have to tell that guard very clearly that you want to let go of the past and the future, so that you can dwell in the present moment. When you tell your guard that, the mind can do it quite easily as you go deeper into the present moment and become accustomed to the happiness and freedom of just being in the now.

In the next stage of the meditation you will find that you can't even think. I'm not sure if any of you like music. But if you are listening to a beautiful piece of classical music, in a great theatre or concert hall, do you ever turn around to the person next to you and start talking, saying what a wonderful piece of music it is? If you did you'd get thrown out, and for good reason because as soon as you start talking it means you are no longer listening. It's the same with your mind, when you think of something, or label something, it means you're no longer listening. It's like being a host at a party, your job is just to greet the visitors when they come in, not to linger in conversation. Because if you have a conversation with one guest it means you are not paying attention to the guest who is coming right behind. The stream of the present moment, if it is attended to fully, gives no time for thought or for inner conversation. In that silence there is a deepening of what I call contentment. It's just like two old

people who have been living together for so many years; they know each other so well, they're so at ease in each other's company, that there's no need to talk. In the same way, when you are fully at ease with the present moment, there is no need to say anything.

All thinking is a sign of discontent; all thinking is a sign of wanting to escape to somewhere else. So much of thinking is "what should I do next?" When contentment arises in the mind such thoughts cannot arise. In the meditation that I teach I always ask people to recognise the happiness of the present moment and also the happiness of silence; each of those is very beautiful. Once you realise the happiness of those states there's no need to make any effort to meditate, there's no need to try. The mind by itself will always incline to where it finds happiness. This is one of the beautiful teachings of the Buddha found in the *suttas*. Once that happiness is perceived you do not even need to think or make a resolution or decision, "may I go deeper into *samādhi* or stillness", because these things happen all by themselves.

In these stages of meditation it's not a case of going on to something else, it's a case of going deeper into this present moment. You go deeper into where you are, as you go into the silence of the mind and start to notice the happiness of silently being, without needing to say anything at all. When that happiness is acknowledged you find that you cannot speak in the same way. You can be watching a movie on the television and you don't say anything to anybody because you are enjoying every moment of what is happening. Here you are watching beautiful peaceful silence. In the path of meditation there has to be a deepening of the silence of the present moment. It's a deepening from diversity to unity, in the same present moment awareness. In silence the mind can still go out to many things: to the body, sounds, all sorts of different objects. In *jhāna* meditation there is the focussing of the mind on just the one chosen object, with that silent awareness just focussing on one thing. One is now letting go of the diversity of the mind – what you might call the duality of the mind, or the movement of the mind from one thing to another. This will often happen quite naturally. In the silence there will always be one thing that appears to be beautiful and happy.

I was taught to choose to watch the breath. We watch the breath without controlling, just being a silent observer, telling that gatekeeper to just stay with the breath as it goes in and out. As you get closer to the breath you don't even know if it's going in or going out, you just know this breath that is happening now. This is like a carpenter who is sawing a piece of wood, focussing closer and closer on the point where the saw meets the wood. He cannot tell whether he's focussing on the beginning or the end of the saw. All you know is this part of breath is happening now. Sometimes people who try breath meditation have great difficulty because of controlling. It is especially at this stage of the meditation that one has to let go of something that is very deep inside of us, the 'will'. When we try and do this we often see how much we are trying to control and manipulate, and this is what always messes up our meditation. This is a cause for *samādhi* headaches.

Knowing that there's a problem, analysing and seeing what the difficulty is, there is always a way of overcoming it. In meditation as in other parts of life, if we know the problem, we can always avoid it. I give people the simile of the snakes – it's my own simile drawn from the time when I was living in Ajahn Chah's monastery in Thailand. These were jungle monasteries and in those jungles there were many snakes. You'd see far more snakes in Thailand in just one day than I've seen in years in Australia. The place was crawling with snakes. When I first went there I was told that there are one hundred species of snake in Thailand, ninety-nine of them are poisonous and the other one crushes you to death. So they are all very dangerous. There was no electricity, sometimes we didn't have batteries for our flashlights, and sometimes we didn't even have sandals. It was a very poor monastery. After the evening meditation we had to walk from the hall in the darkness using the stars or moonlight to light the way through the jungle back to our huts, which were sometimes five hundred metres away. Because I knew there were snakes about I was always on the lookout for them and, because I was on the lookout for them, because I was mindful of the danger, I could always see them in plenty of time. I would step around them or jump over them, but I never stepped on them. Actually, once I nearly stepped on one; fortunately the snake jumped one way and I jumped the other way. We were both very happy that we didn't choose the same direction. I never stepped on one because I was always looking out for them.

In the same way, whatever problems and difficulties you have in your meditation, if you really appreciate that it's a problem and you know it's a danger, then you will look upon it like a snake. That means you will be able to see it in good time before it can bite you. And this is how we can avoid the problems in our meditation. Whether it's sleepiness, too much thinking, or whether it's the mind wandering from one thing to another, know your snake and then you'll be able to take evasive action before it really gets a hold of you. The thinking mind, once it gets hold of you, is hard to stop. Anger, once it grabs hold of you, bites and bites, you cannot get it off. If you avoid it, then you are free.

On this path of meditation, concentrating on the breath or concentrating on any one thing, is just a way of overcoming problems by keeping the sense activities still. At least you are letting go of most of the five senses. By just watching one thing all the other senses disappear: you can neither hear nor feel the rest of the body, and smell and taste have already gone. This letting go of the five senses is very profound because they define our mind and body. If we meditate very deeply we won't be able to hear anything of the sounds outside. In the same way, just giving a simile from ordinary life, when you watch the television sometimes you can't hear your partner saying dinner is ready, or you can't hear the telephone. Two of my disciples, I'm embarrassed to say, were watching the television one evening in their house and when the program finished they looked around and noticed that a few things were missing from the room. A burglar had been into their house, came right into the room where they were watching the T.V., and stole things from right behind them. They had been so engrossed in the movie they hadn't even heard this very cheeky burglar.

I don't encourage that! But in meditation, if it happens, you are getting somewhere. What it means is that you have been able to let go of concern for the world outside and you are getting closer and closer to what we call the mind. As you all know, in Buddhism there are six senses. The five external senses dominate the consciousness so much that it's like an Emperor with knee high boots, trousers, a big jacket, a hat on, and a scarf around his head so you can't see anything of him. All you can see are the garments covering the Emperor from head to toe. In that simile, the Emperor stands for the mind, the hat is sight, the scarf sound, the jacket smell, the trousers taste, and the boots touch, completely covering that which we call the mind.

From Diversity to Unity

Meditation is letting go of all that. We are letting go of the five senses by choosing just one part of one sense base, just the breath, or something else. After a while everything disappears, until even the perception of the breath disappears. In other words it is the happiness of just being with one simple little thing. Eventually that happiness becomes so strong that the mind becomes aware of the happiness of the breath disappearing. Once the body or the five senses disappear, in traditional Buddhism, in the way of my teachers, and in the way of experience, what happens next is that a beautiful light appears in the mind. In our tradition we call this a *nimitta*.

This *nimitta* is no more than the sign of your mind when the other five senses disappear. The Buddha gave a very wonderful simile; he said it's the same as on a cloudy night when the clouds part and the disc of the full moon appears – bright, brilliant, and clear – in the sky. This is a simile of what happens when the five senses disappear. What you are seeing is a reflection of your own mind. I always tell meditators to understand that what you are seeing is not something through the eye, it is not a vision; this is a *mental object*. This is the mind being a beautiful mirror and seeing itself. And at this time in the meditation, when these beautiful lights appear, you have to be very still because it's like looking at your own face in the mirror. If you move then so does the image in the mirror. If you try and hold the mirror still it doesn't make any difference, *you have to be still*. The observer has to be so still, so motionless that what is being observed is also motionless. The degree of peacefulness is measured by the stillness one experiences in these states. The degree of inner energy is born of stillness, born of contentment, and is the measure of the happiness. The brilliance of what one experiences is the happiness – and that becomes quite immense at this stage – but it's not a happiness of the five senses. On the contrary, it's the happiness of the mind released from that world; it's happiness born of letting go.

As an interesting aside, many of you may have heard of people who have had 'out of the body experiences', people who have died temporarily and come back to tell the tale. Have you ever heard of people dying? First of all they float out of their body

and then they seem to be going towards the light. What you experience when you die is no more than the five senses stopping and the mind manifesting itself.

That mind being manifest is no more than the light that people see when they die. That's why this meditation is almost like training for dying and getting to know what it's like when the five senses stop and disappear. If you can manage to merge into the light, that is called *jhāna* in Theravāda Buddhism. It's called a *jhāna* because it's a fullness of the meditation, a time when you've completely merged with the mind and the five senses are completely gone. In our tradition it's the first real experience of non-duality; it's non-duality because there are not two any more, there is no separate observer, the mind is unified. It is the first real experience of what they call *samādhi*, that centring or unification just on the one sense of mind. And it's very blissful. But it's not that one gains these states just for the sake of bliss; it's also for the sake of what these states mean.

These aren't stages of attachment; they are stages of letting go. They arise because you've let go of a great burden. One of the disciples here in Perth – I like telling this story because it's a fascinating story – managed to get into one of these states of meditation. He just fluked it by chance. He was doing meditation in the bedroom of his house. After a couple of hours his wife checked up on him because he usually only meditated for forty-five minutes or an hour. When she went into the room she saw her husband, a middle aged Australian, sitting so still she couldn't even see his chest moving. She put a mirror under his nose and she could see no sign of breath; so she panicked and called the ambulance. The ambulance came from Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and the medics stormed into the bedroom where he was sitting meditation. They took his pulse; there was no pulse at all. So they put him onto the stretcher and into the back of the ambulance and went screaming off with all the sirens going to the hospital. They got him into the emergency room and put all the machines on him and they could see from the machines that he had no heart beat and no brain waves; he was brain dead! But the interesting thing is that the person who was looking after the emergency room that evening was an Indian doctor. He was an Australian, but his parents were from India, and he had heard his parents talking about people who go into deep meditation in India. When he heard that was what this man had been doing he noticed a strange thing: the upper half of his body was still warm;

usually if someone is dead they would be cold all over. So he decided to give him electric shocks, to try and start his heart up again. They tried several times and nothing worked. Then the man came naturally out of his meditation, sat up, and asked, “How did I get here?” Afterwards he said he was just blissed out. But the worst part of the experience was walking home with his wife because she gave him a scolding and made him promise her that he would never do it again. That was a shame because it was a wonderful experience to have and it showed just what’s possible with meditation.

The happiness of that state should be understood. It is the happiness of letting go. Anyone who has experienced those states already knows what will happen when they die. When the body disappears, you are left with the mind. When you experience these states you’re beginning to understand the core of this thing that we call body and mind. You’ll never have any doubts about rebirth, nor will you have any fears about death, if you understand the nature of the mind. But more than that, one understands that by letting go of doing, manipulating, and craving you get these happy states.

Many people have had these states once, just by chance, and have craved to get them back again. If you’ve had a religious experience, a state of bliss, and crave to get it back again you never will. The only way to experience those states is by a very profound letting go, a very, very profound non-doing, and a very profound emptiness of the mind, a mind empty of the ‘doer’. All these things just happen by themselves. They are beautiful processes, empty of a ‘controller’, empty of a ‘doer’. That is what you are learning to let go of in this beautiful meditation. The more you control, the more you press the buttons and flick the switches, the more problems you get.

It can be very scary to get into deep meditations. Do you know the reason why? It’s because ‘you’ have to disappear before you get into them. You’re letting go of you, or what you take to be you. That’s why it’s wonderful to be able to completely get rid of the person in here who is always calling the shots, always talking, always making the decisions. Just allow things to stop by themselves. Once in our monastery in Thailand, there was a young novice who was listening to a talk by our teacher Ajahn Chah. Ajahn Chah would go on and on and on for many hours – I promise I won’t go on for much longer! He would go on and on and on and this little novice was

thinking, 'When is he going to stop?' 'When is he going to stop?' Hour after hour this little novice kept on thinking, 'When is Ajahn Chah going to stop?' and then the novice had what we call an insight. Instead of thinking, 'When is Ajahn Chah going to stop?' he thought, 'When will I stop?' And he stopped. When he came out of his meditation many hours later the hall was empty. Ajahn Chah had gone to his hut and he was just sitting there happy and blissed out. He had stopped. Isn't it wonderful to stop?

Every time we come up to a red traffic light it's teaching us Buddhism. Stop! Do you know that in Delhi the traffic lights don't have S.T.O.P. written on the red light; instead they have R.E.L.A.X.! So when people come to a traffic light in Delhi instead of getting tight and tense they see this beautiful word 'relax'. That's what meditation is all about: in that stopping is happiness. The more you stop, the more happiness you have and this is the reason meditation gives you that inner joy, that inner happiness. By stopping you energise the mind. You energise the body by exercising it, but you energise the mind by stopping it and calming it.

Once you can get into very deep meditation, if you want to, you can even remember your past lives. All you need to do is ask yourself, what is your earliest memory? The mind that has a deep experience of stillness comes out of that stillness so clear, so powerful, and so well trained, that memories of your past come up very clearly, even memories of the time when you were born. Some people think that when you are born you've got no consciousness. I've been collecting stories of babies who speak. I have heard of two cases already in Perth. One of the cases was from two Australians, Westerners, who came to the monastery one day. They had two children, one was a three week old baby and one was about two and a half years old. One baby was named Peter and the other was called Richard. It was time for the elder boy Peter to go to bed and the mother and father sent him up to his room. Before he went to bed, he went to the pram leaned over and said to his baby brother, "Good night Richard", and little Richard said, "Good night Peter". They were spooked; they couldn't believe what they had heard. They stopped reading their magazines and turned around in disbelief looking at the pram. The elder boy said once more, "Good night Richard" and this time with both parents watching, fully mindful, little Richard three weeks old said, "Good night Peter", and both the parents heard it very clearly.

There are other cases like that. One case I've heard of was in Malaysia. It was in a newspaper article so I don't know if it is true or not, but it deserves to be true. In a maternity ward in the United States, in front of the doctor, the midwife, and the nurses, when this little baby came out of the womb, it spoke in clear English, saying, "Oh no, not again!"

You were actually conscious at the time of your birth. And you can remember your past lives. What a wonderful thing to actually show that Buddhism is true and that meditation works. But please make sure that you don't come out again and say, "Oh no, not again!" Please let go of this world.

Conclusion

So, in our tradition that's what we call the *jhāna* meditations, and you can experience those *jhāna* meditations deeply and powerfully. One of the things about *jhāna* meditations is that you can't think, you can't hear, you are completely non-dual, one pointed. There are many different *jhānas*, each of a different level, each level with more refined bliss. As you let go, not only are you knowing the nature of the mind but you're letting go of that mind and with full letting go everything disappears. That's what we mean by the bliss of *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* in our tradition is indicated by a flame going out. That was the usual word used when a candle or oil light flickered and completely went out. It was said the flame had *Nibbāna*-ed.

Some of you ask, "Where is *Nibbāna*, where do you go after you get *Nibbāna*-ed?" The answer is another question, 'where does the flame go?' Does it go to the North, the South, the East, or the West? The answer is no, the flame was always empty, it just depended on heat, the wick, and the wax. When those conditions end so does the flame. And the conditions that keep you going, when they disappear, then so do you. Like a beautiful meteorite going around this solar system for thousands, millions, or billions of years, one day it finally reaches the end. It burns in a beautiful light which you see as a shooting star and then it's gone. The beautiful light which you see as a shooting star is gone forever. It's just like a person roaming around *saṃsāra*, life after life after life, until eventually they meet the Dhamma of the Buddha and go out in a

beautiful blaze of light. They illuminate the Dhamma for so many people, and then they're gone.

10 CONDITIONED REALITY

Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre

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Subjects that often come up in Buddhism are the conditioned and unconditioned, especially if one is a seeker after the truth, a seeker after reality, a seeker after freedom. People who have studied basic psychology, or have some understanding of the nature of things, know how much we are conditioned by our *kamma,* by our experiences, and by so many different things. Those conditions actually affect the way we see the world and experience reality. They also affect our choices and the way we use our life. When we look very deeply, we can see that our choices condition our lives, but our choices are not free. There are many influences making us do the things that we do. The way we look at things is not as 'they truly are'. Many people have pointed out that we see, we hear, and we experience what we want to experience and what we want to see. This is the reason that our reality differs from the reality of the person sitting next to us.

The Cycle of Delusion

We create and make our own reality, our own world. We live in that world. We condition that world. I spoke very briefly earlier about the Buddhist idea of a God, especially about creation and whether Buddhists believe in a 'big bang', or in the beginning of things. The person who asked me that question very accurately pointed out that the one thing that we can know is that there is a creator inside of us. We create our world. We might say we condition our world. The way we condition our world is very much due to outside influences. People wish to be free and we talk a lot about freedom in this Western world, but if we look deeper, we find that what we take to be freedom is bound by the chains of conditioning. The goal of Buddhism is to see that conditioning, recognise it and untie those bonds.

In Buddhism we have a teaching called the Ten Fetters. Fetter is a very accurate translation of the Pāli word *saṃyojana.* Using the ideas of the agrarian society of India 2,500 ago, *yojana* means the wooden neckpiece for coupling a pair of draught oxen. This was how one joined the oxen together to pull a cart. This is a fetter, a

binding. The whole idea of Buddhism is to recognise that you are bound and then to untie that binding to achieve a type of freedom that is not recognised in this world, the freedom of the Enlightened person.

People sometimes think that monks are just attached to rules: attached to being celibate, attached to having few things, and attached to being happy. They don't realise that this is all about freedom from bonds and freedom from conditioning. People don't realise what these conditionings really are. We have blind spots and yet we think that we are freethinkers. We think that we are being rational and scientific. Having worked in science as a theoretical physicist at Cambridge University, I realised even then that many scientists are not freethinkers. They are conditioned. Much of what they do is laden with many, many values, and very often they find what they are looking for, rather than what is really there.

I read an article in a newspaper, about a debate on whether science or 'the scientific method' is value free, in other words, whether it's subjective. The debate was regarding genetically engineered food. The scientists said they were being rational, that there is nothing wrong with genetic engineering. Other people were saying that there is a lot wrong with it. Who is right and who is wrong? The scientists said the other people were being completely irrational and were just seeing things through their own belief systems. Because scientists have no belief systems, they see things as they truly are! The argument was settled for many scientists and philosophers. But who says that science is value free? There are so many conditionings in science that you see just what you want to see. So much so that there is an old saying in science:

> 'The eminence of a great scientist is measured by the
>
> length of time they obstruct progress in their field.'

The more famous the scientist and the more prominent they are, the more their views are taken to be gospel truth. That means a great scientist is so great that he or she can't be wrong. So they actually obstruct progress for many years because they must be right and everyone sees it from that standpoint.

The Buddha very clearly outlined the whole process of conditioning. He explained that we see the world through tinted glasses. He explained that what we take to be truth, to be real, is far from reality. He called the whole process of conditioning and brainwashing, coming mostly from within us, *vipallāsas*. They are the perverted aspect of the whole process of conditioning. They're the reason that what we think we know turns out to be wrong. Have you ever been absolutely sure you were right and then found out you were wrong? It happens all the time. The *vipallāsas*, these perversions of the conditioning process, work in a circle, a cycle of delusion. Our views – what we understand as truth, as reality – influence our perceptions. Basically our views influence what we choose to see, to hear, and experience. Out of all the different impressions that life offers us there are many things that you could be aware of right now. You could be aware of what I am saying. You could be just aware of what I look like. You could be aware of some fantasies being played out in your mind. Why do you choose to be aware of one thing and not the other? It's because your views guide your choice.

If you are angry at someone, or if you have ill will towards them, you will always find something in them to justify that ill will. They say, "Please, have a nice day today", and you think "what on earth do they mean by that?" It is the same with paranoia. If someone is really paranoid, they may think a monk is reading their mind. The monk says, "No I'm not," and they say, "I knew you were going to say that." A psychiatrist told me a few days ago that you can only increase paranoia, you can't decrease it. Whatever you say is looked upon by that person as confirming their view. If you are in love with somebody it doesn't matter what they do or say. If they pick their nose, they pick it in such a charming way. You think, "I just love the way you do that".

Perception is completely controlled by your views. I'm going to read a story just to show this. This story is called 'Harvard's Loss'. "The President of Harvard University made a mistake by prejudging people and it cost him dearly. A lady in a faded gingham dress (gingham is just plain woven striped or checked cotton cloth) and her husband, in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston, Massachusetts and walked timidly without an appointment into the University President's outer office. The secretary frowned. She could tell in a moment that such

backwoods country hicks had no business at Harvard University and probably didn't even deserve to be in Cambridge. "We want to see the President" the man said softly. "He'll be busy all day" the secretary snapped. "We'll wait", the lady replied.

The secretary ignored them for hours hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away, but they didn't. The secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the President, even though it was a chore she always regretted doing. "Maybe if they just see you for a few minutes they'll leave", she told the President of Harvard University. He sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously did not have the time to spend with them, but he detested gingham dresses and home spun suits cluttering up his outer office. The President, stern faced with dignity, strutted towards the couple. The lady told him, "We had a son who attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard and he was happy here but about a year ago he was accidentally killed. So, my husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on the campus. The President wasn't touched, he was shocked. "Madam", he said gruffly, "we can't put up a statue to every person who attended Harvard and died, if we did the place would look like a cemetery." "Oh no", the lady explained quickly, "We don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard." The president rolled his eyes. He glanced at the gingham dress and the homespun suit and exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any idea how much a building costs? (This was many years ago.) We have over seven and a half million dollars in plant at Harvard." For a moment the lady was silent. The President was pleased, he could get rid of them now. The lady turned to her husband and said quietly, "if that is all it costs to start a university, why don't we just start our own," and her husband nodded. The president's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment. Mr and Mrs Leyland Stanford walked away, travelled to Palo Alto, California, where they established a university known as Stanford University that bears their name. It was a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about."

Isn't that a lovely story? Just because those two people wore ordinary dress no one realised that they were millionaires and so they started their own university. Isn't that so often the case in life?

What we are looking for is what we see. That's the reason the Buddha taught that

even your bare perception is already conditioned. Even what you hear – or rather what you choose to hear – what you choose to see, choose to feel, has already been filtered by your conditioning, by your attachments, by your desires and cravings. That's why even teaching of Krishnamurti, a sort of silent awareness, or non-doing was not good enough to find the real truth. What you see and hear is never reliable. That's the reason why sometimes, when I give talks, I give one message, but what you hear may be very different from the message. Something happens to the words that I say before they go into your consciousness. Some things get filtered out! Has it ever happened to you? Have you ever said something and it's been completely misunderstood? You say, "I didn't say that", and the other person says, "Yes you did". You may have said many things, but they've been filtered out or taken out of context. That's where misunderstandings come from. When you begin to understand the way that this cognitive process works, you can understand how we condition even our bare perceptions.

From those perceptions we build up our thoughts. This bare knowledge that comes to the mind as you feel, as you see, builds up our thoughts. And those thoughts in turn confirm our views. We have this circle of views bending our perceptions to suit their purpose, and those perceptions, again bending the thoughts to confirm the views. That's the reason we have different ideas, philosophies, and religions in this world. One of those religions is science. Another can be psychology, and others can be humanism, irrationalism, agnosticism, or even Buddhism. These are all different views and ideas in the world. What really concerned me when I was young was where these views and ideas came from. Why do rational people believe in a God who created this world and at the same time created the Devil just to tease people? That was very difficult for me to understand. Other points of view, for example, the idea of conditioning shaped by our existing views, thoughts, and perceptions, made it very clear how this was happening. What we receive from the world is basically conditioned by what we expect to receive.

In Denial

I am going to read a poem now. Listen to this poem. It's about the love for a mother and everyone knows that that's a wonderful thing.

> ‘When your mother has grown older and you have grown older,
> When what was formally easy and effortless becomes a burden,
> When her dear loyal eyes do not look out into life as before,
> When her legs have grown tired and do not want to carry her any more,
> Then give her your arm for support, accompany her with gladness and joy,
> The hour will come, weeping, when you accompany her on her last journey;
> And if she asks you always answer her, and if she asks again speak also
> And if she asks another time speak to her not stormily but in gentle peace,
> And if she cannot understand you well explain everything joyfully,
> Because the hour will come, the bitter hour, when her mouth will ask no more.’

That’s a poem that was translated from German, written by a very well known German called Adolf Hitler in 1923. Did you know that Adolf Hitler was a poet and that he loved his mother very dearly and thought about his love for his mother? No! Well, isn’t that because our views are that such a man is so bad and evil that we can never even entertain the idea that he could have a soft emotional loving side?

How many of you can make ‘Adolf Hitler’s’ out of your ex-husbands or your ex-wives? Do you understand what I am saying? The conditioning process means that if we think somebody is an enemy then we think they’re rotten. We think they’re bad and that’s all we see. We can even think, ‘I am rotten’, ‘I am bad’, ‘I am awful’, and that’s what we’ll see. The conditioning process is so strong that people can sometimes get so depressed with themselves that they commit suicide. Or they can get so full of themselves that they become egocentric and don’t listen to anyone else. This is all just conditioning working in these three ways. Don’t think that you are free from that. Even now you are not hearing what I am saying but what you want to hear, what you expect to hear. This is the difficulty for human beings, being able to know the truth of things.

Another example is rebirth or reincarnation. It’s a fascinating subject: not whether it’s true or false, but why people believe it’s true or false. That’s something that has fascinated me for many years. Why is it that when someone has a memory of a rebirth and they clearly remember it, other people often say, “No, it cannot be that

way, there has to be some other explanation"? Or, why is it that when something happens to you, you believe it has to be due to some event in a previous birth? Why are there such strong views on either side? I am especially interested in the reason people refuse to believe in rebirth. As a scientist, as a rational person, at the very least you should have an open mind. To me it was something that was quite obvious, something that I grew up with. My parents weren't Buddhists but rebirth always seemed such an obvious thing to me. I don't know where I got that idea from, but there it was. I found when I came to Western countries like Australia, or when I go to see my family in England, that there is a great resistance to the very idea of rebirth. It wasn't that people had open minds; rather they had very closed minds, a locked door to the idea. When I looked deeply, I saw clearly that people had a very strong antagonism to the idea of rebirth. The main reason people are afraid of rebirth is because they don't want to be reborn. They just want to have this life and that's the end. That is one of the reasons people will not even entertain strong hard evidence that they have lived before and that they are going to live again.

Whether it's Buddhism, Christianity, or Hinduism, or whatever, rebirth leads to a new life. No matter what religion or belief you have, the next life is always dependent on what you've done in this life. Basically most people are so ill behaved that they are scared of what's going to happen to them in their next life. They would rather believe that there is not going to be a next life. They are in denial! Where does that denial come from? Again, it's the conditioning and brain washing, "I don't want to believe it's true. I don't want to see this and therefore I don't see it".

Another example is from a disciple of mine. Many years ago she had a very big problem because her husband was sexually abusing her children. He went to jail. She couldn't see what was happening for many months. She was a very loving mother and a very loving wife. As sometimes happens in those terrible situations, it came out at school. The teachers saw the signs and when they investigated they found that they had assessed the situation correctly, the children where being abused. The mother felt very guilty, but why was it that she couldn't see those signs? As a Buddhist monk – who knows about the mind, knows about conditioning, knows about the psychology of all this – I had to explain to her the reason she could not see what others could see. The situation was so horrendous that subconsciously she didn't want to see it. If you

don't want to see something you just cannot see it. It's not a matter of suppression, which is done openly. It's blocked out at a subconscious level. It happens before this process comes to the mind's consciousness. It's already been filtered out.

There was a very interesting experiment done a few years ago at Harvard University. In front of some volunteer students psychologists flashed images on a screen and asked the students to write down what they thought the image represented. The image was flashed so quickly that at first they could not really make out what the image was. Gradually the length of the exposure was increased until they could record some idea of what it was. Then the time on the screen was further increased so that the students could record whether it was what they had expected it to be, until the time the exposure was long enough for them to clearly tell what it was.

The findings are illustrated with one example. The actual photograph was of a very well known part of the campus, a set of steps going up to one of the faculty buildings. There was a bicycle by the side of the steps. One student saw it as a ship at sea, but because the image was flashed so quickly it wasn't much more than a guess. However, once that idea was in his mind, when the length of exposure on the screen was increased incrementally, he still saw it as a ship at sea, again and again. He saw it as a ship when every one else could see it as a well know part of the campus. He insisted it was a ship at sea until the exposure was so long that he eventually saw his mistake and corrected it. The lesson from that was that once you form a view it interferes so greatly with your perception that even though the image is right in front of you, you cannot see it. You see it in a different way than it truly is.

One of the images that were during the experiment took the students a particularly long time to figure out; it was a picture of two dogs copulating. It was such an obscene or unpleasant thing to see that the students were in complete denial, again and again and again, until it was so obvious that they had to see it for what it was. This is solid evidence for what the Buddha said about the perversions of our cognitive processes. Even though we think we know what our partner is saying to us, even though we think we know who they are, how often we are wrong. This is so not just in relationships with others, but also in our relationship with ourselves.

Seeing Truth and Reality

I want particularly to mention the relationship to truth. Is Buddhism just another conditioned belief like everything else, with no greater validity than science or any other religion? Is there no truth? Is it all relative according to our conditioning? In other words, how can we break through a conditioned way of seeing and perceiving? Remember, the whole reason we bend our perceptions, thoughts, and views is because of wanting. We see and we hear what we want to see and hear, and we deny what we don't want to see, hear, or feel. It's the wanting that is the problem. It is wanting that conditions us away from truth.

The Buddha became Enlightened by giving up all wanting. Instead of wanting to see the universe in any particular way, or wanting to see himself in any particular way, he overcame all of that wanting, or craving. That's not a very easy thing to do. It's called 'letting go', being still. The sign of craving is movement. The sign of attachment is not being able to let go. The sign of ego is controlling. That's why we come across those things in meditation: craving, attachments, and controlling, again and again. These things stop us from seeing truth and reality. We have to completely let go of all desire and all craving, temporarily, in our meditation.

Most of you have just meditated for half an hour. At the end of the meditation I told you to look at how you feel. Consider what works and what doesn't work in your meditation. This is an exercise in overcoming conditioning. It's truly brainwashing your mind of all of its conditioning, all of its cravings, all of its wanting to see things this way or that way. It is letting go of all of that, letting go of all your ideas, because they are the bricks and mortar of conditioning. Have you noticed that when you face something you interpret it with your thoughts? Where did all those thoughts come from? Why do you see it this way and not another way? The reason is your conditioning.

A few days ago, someone gave the monks some ginger beer in what looked like wine bottles. It looked like wine, but it wasn't wine; it wasn't alcoholic, it was just ginger beer. This led the monks to talk about alcohol and drinking. The other monks related experiences that I had also had in my youth, when I first went to a public house in England to have my first glass of beer. My first reaction to drinking beer was, "This

is disgusting stuff; how can anyone drink it? Why do people spend so much money drinking this stuff?" That first perception was probably true; bitter beer was disgusting. But after a while I began to like it. I wondered what had happened there. Why was it that when I first tasted the beer it was awful and then, when I was eighteen or nineteen, I was drinking a lot of the stuff? I saw the reason was that it was socially accepted to drink beer, and everyone else said it was delicious. I had reconditioned my senses to like it. Because society said it was delicious, it became delicious. I liked it because I wanted to like it. That's all there was to it.

I've seen that with modern art as well. What is beautiful in modern art? Someone told me that there was an artist in France who managed to talk a gallery into mounting his exhibition. There where just empty picture frames on the empty wall. This was a statement; he sold thousands of dollars worth of pictures. Have you ever seen that happen in the world? What was that which we just heard? Was it a beautiful sound or was it an intrusive mobile phone? Isn't it your conditioning that causes you to see in a particular way? If you know the mind is conditioned, why not condition it in a wise way to create happiness? If it's a mobile phone you have two choices. You can say, "That's a very beautiful sound, it's very musical, not like the old phones, 'ring, ring, ring, ring'. At least it's got a bit of style these days". Or you can say, "We shouldn't have mobile phones in here. Who did that? I'm going to talk to them afterwards. We should excommunicate them from the Buddhist Society. We are never going to let them come in again". Now, which response do you want to take? Can you see how we condition ourselves?

Once we know how conditioning works we can condition ourselves into forgiveness and happiness. One of the first things we can do is say, "Well, I've got a choice. I can develop the positive conditioning or the negative conditioning. I can look at a person and see their good qualities or I can look into them and see their bad qualities. Both are there". I have conditioned myself over the many years that I have been monk, to see the good qualities in people, so much so that some people tell me off saying that I should be a bit more critical. But I cannot do that now. The conditioning is too strong. People in the Monastery, or the monks I live with, sometimes do wrong things. The other day, while I was away, there was a bit of discussion and bad feeling about a decision to do with the books in our monastery. I

talked with one of the people – who felt quite hurt afterwards – and I said, “Look, I can’t get hurt by any of the monks in this monastery. They are all such kind, good people. We know that everyone is not Enlightened and that we’ve all got bad qualities as well”. I was being absolutely honest. I can't get angry at any of the monks in the monastery, no matter what they do, because I see too many good things about them. Even people who come here to the Buddhist Centre, no matter what you do, you have so many good qualities in each one of you. That’s the way my conditioning works now. When you perceive the good in a person it’s impossible to get angry or upset with them. You are all my friends and if I look at you that way it’s very hard to see anything else. If you do something to try and hurt me, I’d say, “No, no, I remember all the good things you’ve done.”

Why is it that if a person says something to upset you, that’s all you remember? You never remember all the kind things they’ve done for you, all the kind words they’ve said to you. I’m the other way. I forget all the rotten things people have said about me and only remember the kind things. Which one is truer? They are both equally wrong. But I choose the one that is wrong and happy. It’s interesting that this type of conditioning – seeing the positive, seeing the happiness, the positive in yourself, the happiness in life, the happiness in other people – is also the path that leads to de-conditioning and the unconditioned, to seeing things clearly.

When you develop happiness in your life – getting rid of negativity and ill will towards oneself and others – it gives you enough time to be at peace. To be at peace means to let go of desires. Once you’re satisfied for the time being, then you have a chance to let go of desires and be at peace. This is the path that the Buddha taught. By having a positive attitude to life, by developing the happiness of the mind, the mind becomes peaceful and tranquil. From that tranquillity, when cravings and desires are temporarily subdued, you start to get clarity of the mind – not seeing things as you want to see them but as they truly are. You can only do this when you start from a position of ease and happiness.

It’s almost like a trick to make you feel very happy and peaceful. When I was reading the *suttas* I realized that this was how the Buddha taught. He’d get people very interested talking about ordinary things first and, when he saw the audience were

really listening and they were happy, then he'd give it to them. Or as one Tibetan monk said, when he's got everyone laughing and their mouths are open, he can then pop in the medicine. The medicine is stillness and peacefulness, because we find there is nobody there, *anattā*, non-self. We find that which we took to be choice is completely conditioned. You think you are in control of everything. You think that you chose to come here. You think you chose to cough or to move your arm this way or that way. I've looked at my choices, at my will, over many years, seeing what was conditioned and what was coming from me, and I found out that it was all conditioned. That's why I tell the same jokes again and again, I can't help it. It's not me; it's conditioning.

Where Choice Ceases

I've been giving talks for many years in Perth. Years ago something happened to me; I had an experience that really shocked me to the core. It was one of those really powerful experiences. This was before this Dhamma Hall was built. We used to give the Dhamma talks in the community hall next door and our library was in what is now the reception area. One Saturday morning, I was browsing through the audio tapes and I saw a tape cassette recording of a talk that I had given seven years previously. It was on the same subject as the talk I had given the night before. What I had said the night before was still fresh in my mind and I thought I would compare the two talks to see how I had changed over seven years. I wanted to see if the talk I had given the night before was substantially different from the one I gave seven years previously. When I played that tape it sent real shivers up my spine. I found that I was repeating whole paragraphs almost word for word after a seven-year separation between the talks. The night before I had really thought that I was choosing every word with complete free choice and that my interpretation and my perception was fresh, but the coincidence was just too much. If I really did have free choice why was it exactly the same, paragraph by paragraph? It showed me that what I thought was free was not free at all but completely conditioned.

It really affected me because it affected my sense of self, my sense of will, my sense of direction in the world. Who was actually pulling the strings? Who was deciding and making those choices? It frightened me, but it also gave me an intuition that I

was able to follow to get into deep meditation. When there is no one left, when there is no will left, when choice ceases and ends, this is where we can actually understand something of the unconditioned.

The whole idea of non-self is difficult for many people because our conditioning will not allow us to see it. The whole idea of the Buddha's teaching of suffering, of *dukkha*, is very difficult for people. Why? Because they don't want to admit that life is suffering. The whole idea of celibate monks is very difficult. We still want to have our sexual relationships. I seem to be forever reading articles in magazines by people who are trying to see if they can still have sex and be Enlightened at the same time. That's what people want. As the old saying goes, "they want to have their cake and eat it at the same time". You can't have your cake and eat it. What that old saying means is that if you eat the cake it's gone. You can't keep the cake and also consume it. You can have one thing or the other. Often when I talk like that people are shocked. "What do you mean you have to be celibate to become Enlightened?" I say, "Yes, that's true", and they say, "Surely not," wriggle, wriggle, wriggle, writhe, writhe, writhe!

What I've said is probably something that you will not agree with. Why, because that view goes completely against your perceptions. Informed by that view the thoughts go against it. You're in that cycle. But what about Ajahn Brahm, isn't he in his own cycle of views and perceptions and thoughts? Isn't that just a monk's conditioning? The only way you can find out these things is to let go of all preconceived ideas and notions – make the mind so empty and so still that you can actually see things as they truly are and not through the eyes of a monk. See things not through the eyes of a sexually involved man or woman, not through the eyes of an Asian or a Westerner. But to see things as just empty of all those labels and positions" let go of so much that all of those ideas, positions, thoughts, and feelings completely vanish. Do you know what that's called? It's called *jhāna*, deep meditation.

What you have to do to be able to see the truth is to creep up on it, silently, invisibly. That's the only way you can overcome the conditioning. In Buddhism we say the five hindrances –sensory desire, ill will, restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor, and doubt – are what stop you from seeing clearly. Basically sensory desire and ill will

are the two main hindrances. They are only overcome in those deep meditations called *jhānas*. The mystics, the people who sit meditation and get into deep states of mind, are overcoming all of their conditioning temporarily. They are letting go of all they have been taught, all they have ever thought, all that could be true or not true, and then they can see reality outside of conditions. What they see is not what they expected to find. All great insights and Enlightening wisdom will always shock you to the core, and I really mean shock you to the core. It's not what you expected. What you expect is just conditioned. What you can't expect, what you can't imagine, is what is true.

That's the reason all the philosophising imaginable and working things out can never reach the truth. All movement of the mind misses the point. Only in silence, deep stillness, can you understand the truth. In particular, you understand the nature of the mind, the nature of happiness, and only then can you get a glimpse of what we call in Buddhism the 'unconditioned'. It is only when everything is let go of – all you've ever learnt, expected, found, or not wanted to find – that you see what is true. That's the way to become Enlightened. That's the reason all the Enlightened beings that I've met in my life, people like Ajahn Chah, have been completely unpredictable. The conditioning just hasn't been there. That's the reason you observe these people for many years and yet they always surprise you. That's always been a sign of a very wise person. Instead of always acting out of conditioning they are just incredibly innovative, doing things in a way you would never expect. That was one of the amazing things about Ajahn Chah; you always had to be on your toes because you never knew what he was going to do next. He would always shock you, one minute tearing you to shreds for doing what you thought was nothing, and then he would give you a cup of tea or send a cup of tea especially for you. With that degree of 'being beyond conditions', one didn't know what he was doing or why. This is what we mean by going beyond conditions.

So, the moral of the story is that whatever you think is truth, you're wrong. What you think is right is already missing the point. You think you are in control of these things, but you're not. But you'll never be able to accept that. It's just too horrendous. Take Nibbāna. People have strange ideas about *Nibbāna*. But those

ideas are not actually the true *Nibbāna*, they are just what people want *Nibbāna* to be. What do you want *Nibbāna* to be? That's what you'll believe *Nibbāna* is. That's the reason I sometimes teach the monks that *Nibbāna* is complete cessation, so much so that the monks have called it Ajahn Brahm's black hole. Everything gets 'sucked away' and there's nothing left.

The monks ask, "What do you want to do that for? Is that the goal, is the whole purpose of all this just to of achieve a complete spiritual, mental, physical suicide, with everything stopping?" People want to enjoy *Nibbāna* when it happens. Cessation is very hard for people to understand and accept. But I say it's true. What do you make of that? You are going to have to find out for yourself! The Buddha said that Buddhas only point the way. They point to the path, but each one of us has to walk that path for ourselves.

If you want to find out how much you are conditioned, how much you have been completely brainwashed, then develop deep meditations and have the courage to be shocked. Have the courage to let go of everything including your own ego and self. Have that degree of strength because only the strong get to Enlightenment. And I'm not talking about the strong in body; I'm talking about the courageous ones who are willing to give everything up for the sake of truth. This is how to overcome conditioning and brainwashing and to finally be free. People in this world think that freedom is being able to do what you want, but greed, hatred, and delusion are controlling you. You are not free at all. If you really want freedom, overcome those conditionings and see reality. It will surprise you, but the truth of Enlightenment is very delightful.

11 EQUANIMITY

23rd August 2000

In the last week somebody asked me to give a talk about *upekkhā*, equanimity. The subject of *upekkhā* is something which I rarely talk about because it's very profound, and how to apply it to one's daily practice of meditation needs to be understood very well. Obviously, the best *upekkhā* is that which happens after the attainment of the end of craving. We can say that the one who has ended all craving is not out there to manipulate the world except out of compassion and loving-kindness. They will most usually practise *upekkhā*, this looking on, this gazing on the world without being involved. However, that's the exalted state of an *Arahant* and in the meantime we have to know how we can use this concept, this practice, this *upekkhā*, in our daily lives, especially in the practice of meditation.

Lessening the Defilements

Upekkhā can be very easily misinterpreted as just allowing the defilements to roll along without getting involved. One of the problems with the idea of *upekkhā* in the face of defilements is that sometimes, without enough clarity of mindfulness, without enough wisdom, one really thinks that one is looking on when in actual fact one is doing something. Sometimes the degree of mindfulness, the degree of clarity of the mind, to really discern whether one is practising equanimity or not, is not high enough. So, we have to be very careful with this practise of equanimity.

People often think that if they just leave the defilements alone and do nothing, just watch and practise equanimity, then if lust or anger come up they will just be equanimous about it. They think this is just the way things are, the way things happen; they think they are letting go. *But in truth they are not letting go*; they are feeding the defilements, the three *kilesas*, sensory desire, ill will, and delusion. By feeding these defilements we can see that we're not really practising equanimity.

One of Ajahn Chah's beautiful descriptions of equanimity is the simile of the leaves on the tree. The leaves on the tree shake, they move backwards and forwards, but only when there is a wind. If the wind dies down or the tree is protected from it so

that the air around it is not moving, then the leaves will move less and less, until eventually they will stop. So the sign that equanimity is actually being practised is that stillness grows in the mind, peace is developing, and the mind is becoming more and more empty of movement. We know that equanimity is being practised because things start to get more peaceful.

So bearing that in mind, we can see that the practice of equanimity in the early stages is done as a skilful means for overcoming some of the defilements that arise from time to time. First of all we must recognise that things like ill will and anger are never justified. Things like sensory desire are always missing the point of the holy life. We need to recognise that underneath all these defilements is a huge amount of delusion. Sometimes we buy into that delusion by believing ourselves and arguing with the teacher, or arguing with the teaching and believing in the delusion. It's wonderful to have the humility to be able to admit, "No, I'm not a Stream Winner yet, I'm not an *Anāgāmī*, and I'm not an *Arahant*". When we acknowledge that to ourselves, so that we do realise that we don't know, then we can have more trust and faith in the teachings of the Buddha and our teachers. Bearing that in mind, the teachings of the Buddha show you that you can know whether the path is being trodden. You can know whether you are practising the right way. You are practising the right way if the defilements get less and less.

We understand that the path to lessening those defilements is the using of all the skilful means that the Buddha gave to us, in particular the Eightfold Path. This particular practice of equanimity must be related to the Four Right Efforts. This was one of the aspects of the Eightfold Path which confused me for many years. How can you put forth effort and then practise equanimity at the same time? Surely *sammā vāyāmā*, right effort, is the opposite of equanimity where you're supposed to do nothing. But a closer examination of the meaning of the Four Right Efforts – the striving, grabbing hold of the mind, initiating energy and working hard to abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen, keeping unwholesome states yet to arise from entering the mind, developing wholesome states of mind and maintaining those wholesome states of mind that have already arisen – is needed. How you apply them really depends upon the goal that you want to achieve. You want to abandon and

keep out unwholesome states and arouse and maintain wholesome states of mind, but how you do that depends upon the circumstances. There are times when we grab hold of the mind and we actually do something and there are times when we just practise equanimity; it's knowing when to do what and that makes one a skilful practitioner.

It's like the pain we experience from time to time in monastic life, the physical pain and the pain of disappointments, the pain of doing things we don't want to do. All those things are problems for the mind. We can do one of two things. We can try and overcome the obstacles, try and work hard to do something. But sometimes there is nothing we can do and then we need equanimity. Very often that's the case with physical pain; you go to the doctor, you try to do exercises, you try to change your diet. Sometimes it works but often it doesn't. So the practice of effort means that there are times when we try to do something, but if there is nothing that can be done, then we have to practice equanimity.

Developing Equanimity

Equanimity doesn't mean just to endure. Equanimity should always be practised alongside investigation because otherwise it will not be able to be maintained and will turn into more problems. Equanimity that is practised alongside investigation – especially with pain – means you are not going to try and get rid of the unpleasant physical feelings, nor are you going to just grit your teeth. Equanimity should be done with a sense of interest, with a sense of investigation, with a sense of curiosity, finding out what these things really are. That is a good way of dealing with *dukkha vedanā*, physical pain: you watch it with equanimity. You watch it in the same way that a scientist needs to watch an experiment, without a vested interest in what they are going to find. Because, if you're looking for something, if you're looking to prove your pet theory, then you'll never have that evenness of mind, you'll never have the equanimity to be really able to see the truth. You'll only see what you're looking for. That's what delusion is.

With equanimity you have to put aside all prejudgement and all the past, because prejudgements arise from our past experiences and past biases. Practising equanimity you have to look upon the object that you find painful as if seeing it for the first time. If you can do that then you really can see that thing clearly and you can investigate it

and find out what that pain really means and how it works. It gives you a lot of freedom, especially in monastic life, to understand this thing called pain. As you get older the physical pain will increase and the physical body will be less able to overcome it. It will get worse and worse until you die. That's your future, my future, and everybody's future.

So you have to have some understanding of physical pain and discomfort. That's body awareness, body contemplation, because that is where that physical pain usually arises. If we can do this – look on pain with equanimity and investigation – we can gain a lot of freedom from pain and the fear of pain. So often pain is fearsome because we never really know it. We are always running away from it, trying to overcome it, never stopping to look at it with equanimity to find out exactly what it is. The Buddha said there are two aspects to pain, two thorns, a mental thorn and a physical thorn. You can take out the mental thorn because the mental thorn is due to wanting, not being at peace with, and not accepting the physical pain. That's something you can control. Very often you can do nothing about the physical pain; it's there until you die. But taking away that mental thorn, that mental dart, is something you can do from time to time. The *Arahant* does it all the time but with the *puthujjana*, the ordinary person, and even with the *Anāgāmī* or the Steam Winner, sometimes that thorn is still there. But you can pull it out so that you really are looking on with equanimity. As I said earlier, you know you have equanimity in the mind when everything gets peaceful, when there is no struggle anymore.

When there is no craving, when there is no desire to have any more than you have right now, full equanimity gives rise to a beautiful stillness and peace in the mind. And of course the deep reason for this is that the 'doer' cannot coexist with equanimity. *Pure equanimity is clear and bright consciousness, without the 'doer.'* Many people think they have equanimity, but if they are still doing things, it's not really equanimity, it's not just looking on, it's looking on and getting involved.

So, we can practise equanimity with physical pain. We can also practise it with some of the things that we have to do, things we don't like, things that we disagree with. We can do this to overcome that 'fault-finding' mind, which I talk so much about in this monastery. I talk so much about it because it is one of the big obstacles to living

happily in a monastery, or in any community; it's a great problem for living happily and gaining deep meditation. When one is sitting on one's cushion that fault-finding mind is one of the big obstacles, and you can understand that the fault finding mind is very far removed from equanimity, from just looking on. With the fault-finding mind you are dealing with *saññā*, perception. Perception is searching out things to complain about. It's a fascinating aspect of the mind to be able to see, to be able to capture this essence, because you see that this creates so much suffering and disappointment and problems for you now and for lifetimes to come. Why is it that the mind is bent on finding faults? Sure the faults are there, but they are surrounded by things that we can be grateful for, things that we can develop loving kindness towards, things that we can develop the beautiful *nimmitta* towards, things we can be at peace with. Why is it that so many human beings incline towards finding faults? They find faults with their fellows in the holy life, find faults in the monastery, find faults in themselves, find faults in the Dhamma, and find faults in the meditation cushions. 'It's not good enough, they're too lumpy'. You can see that the fault-finding mind creates work. It creates conflict; it creates things to do; and it goes in the opposite direction to peace.

If, when we look at something which we cannot change in the monastery, or in our daily lives, when there is something which is irritating us – I'm not talking about physical pain, I'm talking about irritations in the schedule, in the routine etc. – when we can't change it we can develop equanimity towards it. We know we have equanimity towards that irritation if the mind starts to become peaceful again. There's nothing we can do, so we do nothing. We just sit and be with it, and if it's true equanimity there's a lack of activity for the mind and it's fully accepted. The mind is just looking on. The 'doer', the fault-finding mind, has ceased and the mind has developed a sense of stillness and peace.

When you start sitting in meditation and something is irritating you – whether it's a thought from the past, in the bottom, or it's too cold or too hot in your room – if you can't change it, if you can't do anything about it, try to develop equanimity. For many years in my early life as a monk I practised that by using a mantra called "No desire! No desire! No desire!" I would use that mantra in the way that I encourage all

mantras, all words of instructions, to be used. I would mentally say it, but I would also listen to it afterwards: listen to its echo and observe my mind, looking in the direction those words were pointing and following in that direction. If I said, "No desire!" I would watch my mind following obediently and having no desire for a few seconds, then I would have to say it again to remind the mind. "No desire, no desire, no desire!" means no 'doer', it is letting go. However, I did notice that sometimes it didn't work and the reason was that the mindfulness, the clarity, was not strong enough to be able to do that. I thought I was doing "No desire!" but there were underlying desires, underlying currents of craving, which I couldn't see, which I hadn't as yet perceived in my mental landscape.

It was only later that I realised why it didn't work. I could get rid of the worst of the defilements, the cravings, and the doings, so at least I could get to some degree of peacefulness. But certainly I hadn't given up my desire. To be aware of desire, to be aware of the five-sense world – that underlying craving to see, hear, feel, smell, and to touch – is to understand those underlying cravings are not touched by that lesser degree of letting go. That is the reason, I found afterwards that the superficial equanimity needed a bit more power. You have to find a way, a means, to take the mind from the world of activity into the world of letting go, into the dworld of equanimity.

Deepening Equanimity

The way to develop deeper equanimity is to develop the gradual perception of happiness. To see the happiness of not doing, the happiness of equanimity, you have to turn off the switches of doing, controlling, and desire one by one in the correct order. Then you start to see that concern with the past and the future is nothing to do with equanimity at all, nothing to do with just looking on. You are the one sending the mind off to the future, and you are the one sending it to the past.

I remember the meditation instructions of the great teachers in Thailand, they always said 'don't send the mind here and there'. Those great teachers realised that it wasn't the mind going there by itself, but that you the meditator were actually sending it there. You were ordering it there. However, many people lacked the mindfulness to see that. They were responsible for the mind going off to the future or the past. They

were willing it to go. It was them willing it away from the present moment. With deeper mindfulness, with deeper awareness, you could actually see that the mind would naturally stay in the present moment if you let it. It was only when you were interested, when you valued the past, or when you were interested in or valued the future, that you would send it somewhere else. So, seeing with deeper clarity just why the mind wandered off you could develop equanimity. Having equanimity towards the past, equanimity towards the future, in the sense that you weren't concerned with it, the mind would settle into the present moment all by itself. You had turned off the switch of 'doing the past' and 'doing the future', in the same way that tourists who go over to France or England, 'do France', 'do England', or 'do the United States'.

So you're done with all that 'doing', finished with all that travelling into the past and future. With that degree of non-doing you can see that the next thing which you have to give up is thinking. Because we value thinking, don't ever get the idea that you'll just watch the thinking and it'll stop. Don't think you'll just be equanimous about it, or that you'll just see where the thinking goes. It will go everywhere. That won't stop it because you're not really equanimous to the thinking process. If you were equanimous and you didn't really care about thinking, it would stop. But because you care about it, because you value it, because you give it some degree of importance, because you 'will' it along by thinking 'this is interesting', 'this is fascinating', you continue to get lost in thought.

Thought is always one-sided. It is never the full description of a person or an event. Often in my life I've followed thought and assumed that it could describe the person I was thinking about. Not so. But at least I gained the insight that I could never judge another person, I could never figure them out; thinking could not do that. I knew it had been quite arrogant of me, and extremely stupid, to believe in any of the thoughts I may have had about another human being. Straightaway that got rid of all justification for anger and ill will towards others. Instead I started to disbelieve thinking and take away its value. Then I had equanimity, I wasn't trying to 'do thinking', I wasn't sending the mind off after thinking.

Looking on is not talking about what you're looking at; it's just looking, nothing else,

just observing. Surely the thinking mind has to stop with the deepening of equanimity, with the deepening of just looking, just observing. You're coming close to what is traditionally called the silent observer. It's a very good metaphor for a deepening of equanimity, the deepening of *upekkhā*. The silent observer is someone who can look without saying anything. It's very hard for a person to do that in the world. People look and they give their opinion or they give their orders. They say what should be done. Even in this monastery it's very hard for someone to do anything without giving their input into how it can be done better. Often in fact, it's how it can be done worse, but we all think we know how it can be done better. Why do we do that? Don't we want to have simple lives? It's enough having one abbot in the monastery without having twenty or thirty abbots. If you really want to be an abbot just come along and I'll give you the job!

One of the nice things about being a junior monk is that you are not required to make any decisions; all you need to do is just go and sit in your hut all day. However, when you are the junior monk you want to make the decisions. And then when you're the senior monk and have to make the decisions, it's the last thing you want to do. So, that's just the craziness of life. Equanimity is just bare attention, just watching, just looking and overcoming the thinking mind. If you're practising equanimity things have to stop and one of the things that should stop is thought. Then you're in the centre with equanimity. That means equilibrium, not in the past or in the future, just right now in the present moment; it's centring the mind.

Thoughts always take the mind away from the centre or away from the present moment. Thoughts are usually old: you are trying to describe and find some meaning for what happened in the past, which disappeared many moments ago in the equilibrium of the present moment. The still mind starts to go from one sense base to another. What makes the mind go from one sense base to another? So often it's a lack of the deepening of equanimity because there is still a sense of control – there is a sense of interest in what's happening in the ears, the body, the toes. That interest goes in the opposite direction to equanimity. We have to be able to take one object, the breath, and have just bare attention on the breath, just looking on it without trying to control it.

How often is it that people start to meditate and they can't get the breath to be calm and peaceful? You know the reason for that, it's because they are still controlling. Controlling the breath makes it very unpleasant. Leave it alone, let it go, don't be concerned about it, and then it's very easy. Why is it that when we are listening to a talk, eating lunch, or walking back from the dining room to our huts, we breathe quite naturally, quite easily, quite comfortably? That is because we are nor really paying any attention. Why is it that when we pay attention to things they start to get uncomfortable? The reason is because when we pay attention we tend to get involved. It's the 'doer', the 'controller' again. It's the doer and the controller acting in such a subtle way that many people can't see it. They are trying to make the breath peaceful and quiet but it doesn't become peaceful and quiet. Why is that? It is because we are trying to do it; we are not practising equanimity; we are actually doing something.

In the same way when there is pain in the body, or when there's irritation in our monastic life, when there is irritation in the breath that we're watching, try equanimity, *upekkhā*. Don't try to change the way the breath is going in and out. Don't try to make it longer or shorter or smoother or whatever: even if it's uncomfortable be equanimous with it. Just leave the breath alone; just watch and investigate. Be curious about what's happening now. If we can practise that degree of looking on with equanimity, with real *upekkhā*, then it's a great tool for our meditation. If the breath starts to be quiet and starts to smooth out and become comfortable, that's a sign you've been practising *upekkhā*. You know what *upekkhā* means and you also know how to apply it. When we practise *upekkhā* on the uncomfortable breath it turns into a very comfortable peaceful breath.

We gain a lot of insight with such experiences because that degree of *upekkhā* can actually develop the breath into the 'beautiful breath'. If you want the breath to be beautiful what should you do next? Practise *upekkhā*, just look on, just wait, be patient, don't try to do anything. The 'doer' comes from the fault-finding mind: when it sees faults it's not satisfied, it's not content, and it's going to do something about it. That's the nature of the fault-finding mind, it's a condition for doing. Once we have *upekkhā*, there's no fault-finding. We are just looking without judging,

without valuing, without weighing one against the other. We are not weighing the ordinary breath against the beautiful breath. We are not weighing the beautiful breath against the *nimmitta*. We are not weighing *nimmittas* against *jhānas*. We are not weighing anything or evaluating; we are just looking on to see what happens. And if we have done *upekkhā* enough to turn the uncomfortable breath into a comfortable breath, then we can very easily continue that degree of *upekkhā*, that 'just looking' aspect of the mind, just *upekkhā*, *upekkhā*, *upekkhā*. You'll notice the breath will get beautiful all by itself. It will get soft and peaceful, slow and refined. It will become calm because this is what *upekkhā* does.

Upekkhā takes the business away, takes all disturbances away. It takes the wind from the leaf so that the leaf wobbles and shakes less and less. This is just what you're seeing, the mind vibrating less and less as it gets more and more still, as it gets more and more beautiful, as it gets more and more energy. But be careful in these stages: when you start to get energy in the beautiful breath and lots of bliss comes up, that can excite the mind. And so instead of looking on with *upekkhā* you start to get excited. Looking on with excitement. "Wow! This is really good; at last I'm getting somewhere." That's not *upekkhā*, that's another type of wind, and it starts to shake the leaf again.

The Perfection of Equanimity

If you develop *upekkhā* from the very beginning you can very easily carry it though as an important aspect of your attention. Remember also, *upekkhā* is just looking closely. Be very careful here that when the breath becomes refined, you don't get lost in a lack of mindfulness, where you can't really see clearly what's going on. If you cultivate *upekkhā*, it's a very clear seeing, but a very silent seeing. It's like seeing just with eyes and having no hands to mess things up, just the armless seer. If you can do this then everything starts to happen as a natural process because the 'doer' has been taken away and you are just looking on with *upekkhā*.

When the beautiful parts of the meditation start to happen, the beautiful breath and the *nimitta* start to come up, the mind doesn't wobble and shake because it's been set up with *upekkhā*. The mind is generating the ability to just look on clearly without

getting involved, just being a spectator to the whole process. And if you are just a spectator to the whole process, the process takes over and carries you into beautiful *nimittas*: you don't care if that turns into a *jhāna*, whether it disappears, or where it goes or what it does, because your job is just to look. You're a passive observer, just like a person in an aeroplane looking out of the window, you can't tell the pilot to go faster or to go slower. The pilot will go according to his own reasons; your job is just to look out of the window. With *upekkhā*, this is what you're doing just looking out of the window of the mind on to all these beautiful things happening. And if you're just looking on, you're looking without fear, without excitement, without doing anything. With real *upekkhā* there is no fear, there is no excitement. If any fear or excitement comes up it means you've lost the *upekkhā*.

Using *upekkhā* as the key you can enter into the *jhānas*. *Upekkhā* becomes an inclination of the mind. With that inclination of the mind prominent, when you enter the first *jhāna*, that will take you through the wobble of the mind. The wobble of *vitakkavicāra* in the mind, even though it's subtle and pre-verbal will be seen by *upekkhā* will see that as 'doing', as a movement of the mind. The inclination to *upekkhā* will unlock and discard that last bit of 'doing', and develop into the second *jhāna* where there is absolute stillness. *Upekkhā* will discard the bliss of the second *jhāna*: bliss that is so joyful, so what! *Upekkhā* will look and, because it's just looking and inclining towards bliss but not giving it any more energy, just like the leaf it will begin to wobble less and less, until the bliss will just give way to the most refined happiness you've ever experienced. If the inclination towards *upekkhā* has been strong in the beginning been maintained in the middle, it will be the cause for the abandoning of happiness and the consequent abiding in the fourth *jhāna*, where there is just the perfection of *upekkhā*, pure mindfulness, with no doing or movement of the mind.

In the fourth *jhāna* you have the summit of *upekkhā* and, if you can experience something like that, then you know the full meaning of the word *upekkhā*. By developing immaterial *jhānas*, eventually the *upekkhā* of equanimity, ceases too. When one emerges after experiences such as that, it underscores the problem of this thing we call the 'doer'. You start to see what we call the 'doer' and why *upekkhā* is

so difficult to attain. It is because the 'doer', as well as consciousness, is taken to be a self, to be me, to be mine. It is my problem, something that I am concerned about, something that is so close to me. It is something that we cling to no matter what.

Conclusion

We have to see though the practise of *upekkhā* that all these things have to disappear so we can uncover the truth of *anattā*, non-self. There is nobody in here; the five *khandhas* are just completely empty. There is no one who owns these *khandhas*. These *khandhas* don't constitute a self or a soul; there is nothing there. And then through the experience of *upekkhā*, we get so close that we can see these truths. As soon as those truths are seen, *upekkhā* becomes just a natural manifestation of that insight. When we see that there is no one who owns any of this, why should we cling to those things when we know that they are just the play of nature? Why should we try and do all of this? This is the understanding at long last that the rain will come down and the sun will shine according to nature. Who can predict it? No one can. We then stop craving for a sunny day or craving for rain. It's foolish to crave for such things. They are completely out of our control. In the same way we stop craving for pleasure and pain. We stop craving for things to be this way or that way according to our convenience. What about other people's convenience? Why do we always want things to be our way? In the end we know we can't get our own way, so we give up, we let go, we abandon, and develop that equanimity to the world we know we cannot control. All that we can do is guide it from time to time.

The *Arahant* has been through that process, has seen the value of equanimity and how equanimity is an Enlightenment factor. The occurrence of that equanimity will manifest as the *Brahmavihāras*, as beautiful loving kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy. If there is something to do then they will do something for others, to try and encourage that same equanimity. When there is that full equanimity established, then there are no more *kamma* formations manifesting. That which creates rebirth, the distinction between pleasure and pain, distinction between what I like and what I don't like, all that is disappearing, and there is just equanimity. With that degree of equanimity, looking on with curiosity, you can see so easily that the causes of rebirth have disappeared. Equanimity is like the fire going out; it's cool.

Craving is like the hot fire. The more you want, the more ill will is going to come up in your mind and you're going to have anger towards yourself, towards the world, or towards whatever. Remember that fire burns anything, but it's not the wood's fault, the paper's fault, or the grass' fault. It's the fire's fault for being hot. So it's not somebody else's fault. if you're angry with them or have ill will. It's your fault. There is not enough equanimity there, there is not enough peace, and there is not enough stillness. The more craving there is the more *kamma* is being made, the more you are making your future births, making your future abidings in this world, abidings of suffering.

The real equanimity which I've been describing is the equanimity which leads to silence, which leads to peace, which leads to stillness, which leads to *jhānas*, which leads to the ending of things. Those equanimities are the equanimities which lead to *Nibbāna*. To sum up, be very careful: equanimity is not just allowing things to be. It is not equanimity unless, when you allow things to be, they start to disappear and get quiet and still and peaceful. Always measure equanimity by the degree of stillness it creates, seeing if it ends things and leads to *virāga*, the fading away of the problem. And then test it out! Once you know what equanimity truly is, you can use it in all aspects of your life, enabling you to do all those things that you don't really like to do. If you do things with equanimity, they don't move the mind, they don't worry the mind, and they don't make the mind shake and tremble. You can use equanimity in the meditation practise and you can use it at those times when you're sick. You can use that equanimity born of letting go at the time of your death and then you can be free. So please, if you can find *upekkhā*, silent awareness, looking, having eyes but no hands, see that it can assist your happiness in this monastery and your contentment in monastic life. And use it especially to help you develop your meditation.

12 REFLECTIONS THAT ARE CONDUCIVE TO LIBERATION

6th Sept. 2000

Earlier this week somebody asked if I could give a talk on the four objects of contemplation in the Ānāpānasati Sutta (MN 118). Those things one should contemplate when one has just emerged from a deep state of *samādhi,* a deep state of calm. How can one use these four reflections as taught by the Buddha to weaken the defilements and undermine the illusions caused by the defilements? How can one use these reflections to see the Dhamma, to release the mind. and gain the powers and the fruits of the practice?

It's my experience that whatever the Buddha said in the *suttas* always has a very profound and deep meaning. And because it's profound and deep it has a very powerful effect on the mind. It has in a much greater result than you anticipate. So when the Buddha advised in the Ānāpānasati Sutta to contemplate these four things, they are obviously very powerful reflections. I'm sure most of you would know what those four reflections are. In case you have forgotten them they are *anicca* (impermanence), *virāga* (fading away, dispassion), *Nirodha* (cessation), and *paṭinissagga* (letting go, abandoning). You all think you know the meaning of *anicca* and you might think you know the meaning of *virāga*, *Nirodha* and *paṭinissagga.* But if you really knew the meaning of those things you would be able to uproot the defilements and see non-self. You would be able to give up clinging to the wheel of *saṃsāra.*

All these words signify something. It's only when we fully understand what they're pointing to and completely understand their meaning that we can say that we know those things. A sign that you understand is that the mind is released and you experience enormous peace, bliss, and a sense that something has been destroyed.

Freeing the Mind

So, this is much more than a mere intellectual grasp of concepts. This is the experiencing of those concepts. It's actually being *anicca*, feeling that thoroughly and

completely. It's being *virāga*, it's being *Nirodha*, and it's being *paṭinissagga*. In the other words, it's understanding it so completely and fully that it's as if one is standing in the middle, in the very centre of these words, and seeing in all directions exactly what they mean from the inside out. This is what we mean by the power of the mind to create insight.

It's very significant that the Buddha places these reflections after the first twelve steps of the Ānāpānasati Sutta. The first twelve steps are deliberately arranged to create those states that we call *jhānas*. And since as we are passing through these twelve states I'll bring everyone's attention to the states of breathing in, breathing out, developing *sukha*, experiencing *sukha*, and experiencing *pīti*.

Those of you whose meditation has yet to take off, will do well to really reflect on these instructions of the Lord Buddha. When you're doing the meditation on the breath, when you are watching the breath, when you have the breath in mind, don't just watch any old ordinary boring breath. Make a resolution, a gentle suggestion to the mind, "May I breathe in just experiencing *pītisukha*, may I breathe out experiencing *pītisukha*." The bliss, the happiness of contentment, is achieved by developing the perception of the 'beautiful breath', in my terminology. Once you start to develop that then your meditation has some power. You are getting into the nitty gritty of the meditation on the breath. You will find that you don't have to force the mind. The mind wants to play around with this, it wants you to sit more and more, it wants to have more and more seclusion. The mind starts to move away from the worldly interactions between people, books, food, and sleep. The mind wants to have more time with this beautiful breath. It is satisfied. Incline the mind to go ever deeper into ever more profound states of stillness and bliss.

Each one of the first twelve stages of the Ānāpānasati Sutta are calming the mind and feeling *pītisukha* evermore deeply, evermore calmly. And the last stages bring the mind to this sense of stillness and relinquishment, freeing that mind of the previous steps. Freeing the mind means bringing it into the *jhāna* realms. It is freeing the mind from the world of the five senses, freeing it from the last vestiges of the hindrances, freeing it from the body, freeing it from the senses. That's what we mean by freeing

the mind, and that's the *jhānas*.

Anicca

After those *jhānas* have been achieved, the mind is so powerful, deep, and profound and it has the ability to really contemplate fully. The mind should then take up one of these four reflections, in the sense of just suggesting to the mind '*anicca*'. The mind has already been well enough conditioned through hearing the Dhamma, through reading the Dhamma, and through some of the insights that you have already attained, that it should have enough of a clue to get on to the scent of *anicca*. Just as a dog finds the scent of some buried treasure or some illicit drugs and follows that to its source, the mind finds out what *anicca* is truly about.

Once the mind is powerful it can follow the scent. That is called *yoniso manasikàra*, the work of the mind which goes back to the source. Just like a bloodhound finding the source of a scent and following it unerringly to its place of origin, this is what one does with the contemplation of *anicca*. Don't use just your thinking mind and all the ideas you had about *anicca* in the past, because many of those thoughts will not be capable of releasing the mind from the *āsavas,* from the *kilesas*, the defilements and the fetters. That would be a superficial investigation. If you just suggest *anicca* to the mind – it's amazing, even though these will be areas which you've never seen before, places where the mind has never gone before – because of the power of the mind you will be able to penetrate those areas of the Dhamma wherein the treasure of Enlightenment lies. You'll be able to go deeper, not just into your old ideas but into something very new and very profound, into *anicca*, the impermanence, the instability, the irregularity, the lack of continuity.

These words are pointing to one thing, one aspect of the experience of life, of being. You see it as something that is completely insubstantial. To see it like that simile for *vedanā*, or sensation, a drop of water falling on a puddle, 'Plop!' it's gone. Experience it. Even with a fast camera you can hardly catch that moment. It arises and passes away so fast that all you can say, as the Buddha explained, is that there is something there because an arising is seen. But at the same time it is substantial, because its passing away is seen almost immediately afterwards. And this is what we

take to be life, what we take to be the world, what we take to be 'me', what we take to be mine. It is something so insubstantial that you can hardly catch hold of it because it's passing so quickly.

You allow the mind that has been empowered by the deep states of *samādhi* to play around in that area, to be drawn ever deeper into the full meaning of that word. And, as with many searches leading to deep insights one will always have to overcome the two barriers of fear and excitement in order to get to the very heart of these things.

The barriers of fear and excitement are not just barriers to *jhānas* they are also barriers to deep insight. We fear insight because it destroys something that is very close to us, something that we've got so used to, which we feel literally naked without. Just as we'd feel embarrassed and afraid of taking our clothes off in the hall with all these people around because we'd feel unnatural and insecure, in the same way, when you take away these clothes that are your ego and you're sense of self, when you undress all those views and see what's truly there, it can be very fearsome. It takes a great deal of courage, the courage that can only be generated from deep states of *samādhi*.

The monks, hermits, and sages of the past, who dwelt in caves in the mountains and in the forests, have always been known for their courage. Not just the courage to live in such harsh conditions – the dealing with the pains of the body, the lack of food, or the lack of sleep – but the courage to face the obstacles to deep insight. They were willing to die for the truth. And when I say willing to die, it's not just in the sense of the body dying, but also all their ideas and views, their ego, their pride, everything that they've ever known or hoped to know has to be abandoned, given up. *That is the courage of letting go*! Usually it's only when the mind has the power of deep meditation that one can really be courageous and overcome that fear. One is empowered, strong, like a great warrior who goes against an army of thousands and scatters them with the confidence and courage energised by the power of *samādhi*. But excitement can also come up so easily, the excitement of seeing something deep and profound. "Wow! At last!" That thought, that movement of the mind, obstructs the attainment of deep *samādhi* and stops the attainment of insight. To overcome the fear and to overcome the excitement so that you can really see truth for what it is, you

need the calm which is developed by deep *samādhi*. You need that sense of inactivity, the stability of the mind that does not react, but which just sits there and watches, no matter what happens. The sort of mind that can sit there and just watch even if Māra comes and says "Boo!", or if a beautiful lady comes and strips naked in front of you. It is a mind that is absolutely unmoved no matter what happens.

Once you abandon those obstacles to insight you find the mind wants to find the truth. The truth of something like *anicca*, releases the mind from its prison, *saṃsāra*. It shatters the fetters; it arouses the bliss of freedom. It's that joy, happiness, and bliss born of freeing the mind from what one intuitively, instinctively knows is a great burden, a great suffering, a great cause of torture to the mind and the body. Instinctively one knows that, and the mind delights in getting closer to finding the key that unlocks all our chains and frees the mind from *saṃsāra* once and for all. There is something delightful about that insight. Once one can get past those barriers that delight will just draw the mind ever inwards, to play with the meaning of *anicca*, to get to know it intimately, to penetrate to its very heart, to its very core. So, you now know what the Buddha meant by *anicca* and you know what Venerable Koṇḍañño meant in the Dhammacakkappvattana Sutta (SN LVI. 11) that we just chanted: *yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbantaṃ nirodhadhammanti* – all arisings are of the nature not just to cease but to stop once and for all, to end completely in *Nirodha*. That is, all, everything, the complete works, which is truly amazing. You start to see that all this that we know, all the *dhammas*, are of the very nature to cease completely with no remainder. *Nibbāna* becomes clear, *Nibbāna* becomes possible, and *Nibbāna* becomes obvious: It is the ceasing of all things – the flame going out and the fire completely quenched until there is no trace of that fire. Even the imprint of that fire is completely gone.

When one can see the actual ceasing of things, in the same way as Koṇḍañño saw, one sees that, whether it's the body, feelings, perceptions, formations, or consciousness – all the six types of consciousness –all of these things are of that nature to cease completely without any remainder. You see that all of these things that we take to be real, that we take to be hard and solid, are of the nature to disappear without any remainder. You see *anicca* to that degree; not just as the rise and fall, with the fall

giving the energy for another rise, but the rise and fall with no energy left, with nothing remaining, without anything to give rise to new experiences, to new phenomena. So many people in the world think of *anicca* as a ping pong, a yo-yo, just going up and down, never seeing the full meaning of *anicca*. Because they don't understand cessation, because they can't see the real emptiness, the real *suññā* of the sensory world, of the five *khandhas*, they can't see the emptiness of everything. They still think that somewhere there is something real. Without seeing the ending of everything we will always think that somewhere there is something solid. Somewhere 'I am'. Somewhere is the real me, the cosmic me, the cosmic all, or whatever we try and posit the 'self' as. *Anicca* is insubstantiality, irregularity, something: which was is no longer there, as if this whole hall had suddenly vanished without anything remaining, not even the shadow. Just complete emptiness, not even a vacuum, nothing left. Nothing you can measure, nothing you can rationalise, nothing, just emptiness. Gone! Only when one can see *anicca* to that degree has one got a hope of understanding what the Buddha meant by the Four Noble Truths, and what the Buddha meant by *anattā*, non-self.

These are all aspects of one thing. So if you can put those ideas, suggestions, and guides, into the mind, the mind might then follow. The mind might go deep; it might go so deep that it goes to the heart of *anicca* and sees it, knows and realises it. When you come out afterwards, then you'll be able to say '*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ*', (whatever things are subject to arising): the body with all the *vedanās*, the pleasure and pain, beauty and ugliness, all the nice words and rotten words you hear, all the inspiring and stupid thoughts, all the beautiful and disgusting food, sweet and disgusting smells, all the happiness and sorrow in your mind, all your plans, memories, and consciousness through all the six senses – you see them as things that arise and you know that all of them can and must eventually completely cease with no remainder. Everything you ever thought is completely gone, having no remainder. Also all your moments of consciousness: one day no other consciousness arises, it has ceased forever. All the bodies you've ever worn through *saṃsāra* have ceased without remainder. All of your happiness and pain, your agony and ecstasy cease; all of that ceases without remainder. It is no more. It is done with, finished. To actually see that gives you the insight of Aññā-Koṇḍañña. If you can't do that with *anicca* you

can try it with *virāga*.

Virāga

People talk about *virāga* as being dispassion but that's only one possible meaning for the word. The meaning that I prefer is fading away. It's almost like a precursor to *Nirodha*, something that happens before cessation is experienced: *virāga*, the fading away of things. After you've experienced a *jhāna*, you can contemplate that word *virāga*, fading away. The whole idea of fading away is relinquishment. It's not relinquishing things, rather it's you doing the disappearing act, you becoming the invisible man, so invisible that you just completely disappear and nothing is left. In this way there is the fading away of all phenomena: the fading away of the body, the fading away of the world outside, the beautiful fading away of feelings – the happiness and sadness that occupies the mind even more than thoughts.

The great problem of existence is pleasure and pain. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have an end to that problem, to have all the business finished once and for all, to have all your work completed? How can you ever rest when you have pleasure and pain? How can there ever be comfort, contentment, stillness, and peace when *vedanā* is still active? It's impossible. People in the world try to generate *vedanā*, try to generate intense *vedanā*, thinking that that is the way to experience happiness and fulfilment in this world. Sometimes people watch films that frighten the hell out of them or they go to sad movies where they cry their eyes out. It's amazing: they just want more intense pain, more intense pleasure. That's the way of the world. The way of the Buddha, the way of the *samaṇa* (recluse), is to calm all of this, to watch it fade away – to watch the *vedanās* of the world, the intensity of feelings of the world, get less and less and disappear. The longer you stay in monastic life the more you see that now you don't shake and quiver with *vedanās* as you did as a lay person. You see that whatever the world gives you with its vagaries, with its uncertainties, the mind doesn't shake. What before would be a very unpleasant *vedanā*, now doesn't shake the mind. What before would be incredibly pleasant and exciting, now is not. The *vedanā* is beginning to fade away and with that fading away of *vedanā* comes a softening. With the gentling of *vedanā* you get this beautiful peace, and that peace by itself is a type of happiness which people in the world can rarely even understand, let

alone experience.

People in the world think that if all *vedanā* starts to disappear then how can there be happiness. How can there be bliss when you're not doing anything, just sitting quite still? The most bliss you can ever experience in this realm is in deep meditation. Sitting here some of you have experienced it yourselves. If you really want happiness, the happiness of the mind exceeds all other pleasures; it not only exceeds them in its amplitude of happiness, in its degree of pleasure, of raw bliss, but also in its depth and profundity. This is not a shallow superficial thing; this is something that is a rich happiness which you sense when you experience it. It's happiness that is going to the core; it's not just covering you in some fine raiment that you understand is not real. There is something real and meaningful here. As you go into that deep happiness, into that deep stillness, you understand that through the calming of *vedanā* you get all the contentment, all the satisfaction that you ever wanted. From the fading away comes the treasure of getting closer to emptiness, getting closer to *Nirodha* and *Nibbāna*, where everything is gone. When one understands *virāga* in this particular way it will lead you not just into insight but also into calm. It will lead to your 'self' fading away, the knower and the doer disappearing, fading, fading, fading. And as you play around with that concept you begin to understand not just the end of the path, not just *Nibbāna*, but you understand why you are practising this Eightfold Path. You understand that *virāga* is all about fading away.

When you start practising the precepts and the rules of the monastery so much of the harshness of your character fades away. That's the reason people who have been monks or nuns for many years become very soft, gentle, friendly beings, people whom lay-people just love to be around. It's as if all of their harshness and unpleasantness has faded away. That's the result of the precepts, of keeping rules, of keeping *sīla*. Certain aspects of your personality fade, and it's wonderful to see the fading away of what is really quite unwholesome: your ill will, bad speech, and bad actions. When they fade away you understand what this path is all about. Once those things fade away you can see how through sense restraint other things are also fading away: those excitements and titillations that once would occupy your whole day are fading away. You're allowing all your old memories to fade away – all of the past

with all of its difficulties and also its pleasures. You allow it all to fade away to become a person with no history, no past, someone who can let go of time. All your worries and plans about the future, they too are fading away.

In the lay world people spend almost all of their life in the past or the future. When that fades away you're left with the beautiful present moment, just the 'now'. Once things start to fade away you understand that you have to allow thinking to fade. Not to cut it out and stop it, not to try and destroy it – that's just doing it through power, self, and ego, through a sense of 'me' – but to allow it to fade. The word *virāga* is beautiful in its meaning. By taking away your interest, by taking away your sense of value in these things, they fade and disappear, if you're patient enough to give them time. They fade, and you find yourself meditating on the breath. Everything else has faded away: your past and your future, all those stupid thoughts, all of your business, all of your lust. The body is about to fade away because all you have is just the one breath you are watching. So much has faded and disappeared, and now you are watching the breath fade away. The breath gets softer and softer, more and more beautiful, and more and more profound, fading, fading, fading. With the fading away of the breath, the 'doer', this very active, problematical control freak, is fading, fading, fading. It's hardly doing anything at all. When you get to the beautiful breath nothing much is happening; even consciousness is fading. Instead of consciousness being spread all over the place, much of consciousness has faded away. Sight consciousness, sound consciousness, all faded, disappeared. Smell and taste consciousness, faded away into nothing, ended, ceased. You've just got this very refined sense of touch on the breath, just in this moment, a very subtle breath, nothing else is felt in the body. It's all fading away. That gives you so much happiness and pleasure because *dukkha* is fading, disappearing. At last you are beginning to understand the Path. The Path that you've been hoping for, the Path that you ordained for, the path you have been searching for, studying for. What you've been born for is happening. You are experiencing the fading away of suffering – not just thinking about it, not writing a book about it – but you're right there when it's happening and it's beautiful, wonderful, and inspiring. You see the Dhamma start to manifest as suffering fades away. The process takes over because this is what the mind has been born for; this is why the whole process is happening at last. Once you start to allow

everything to fade away, the breath fades and you're just left with a *nimmitta*. The *nimmitta* was there all along just covered by the breath. When the breath fades it reveals the *nimmitta*. The simile the Buddha gave is that it is like the clouds obscuring the full moon. When the clouds part the moon manifests. The moon was there all the time it was just that it was covered. The moon here is the reflection of your mind. It's always there; you're just attending too much to all these other things. When the breath fades away, there is the mind experienced as the *nimmitta*. It allows the last bit of the 'doer' to fade away, things disappear, and you enter a *jhāna*.

Whenever you experience the *jhānas* and reflect on them you see they are all stages of letting go. That's the reason a lot of people can't gain *jhānas*: they are holding on to too much attachment, too much clinging; they just won't let these things fade. They try to either make them fade or try and keep them out of fear, out of stubbornness. But the way into *jhāna* is to allow them to fade away. The fading away of the 'doer' is completed in the second *jhāna*. The fading away of consciousness now starts to happen as more and more things are let go of. The mind gets more and more refined in these different stages of *jhāna*, until everything fades away completely in the experience of *Nirodha*. Afterwards, you see that the whole process is a process of giving up, letting go, abandoning, and relinquishing.

Nirodha

All these beautiful Pāli words in Buddhism are seen as an experience. You've walked on the path and they have been the signposts, the sights along the way. This is what it looks like on the journey. This is the territory and, as these things all fade away, you understand what *virāga* truly means. *Virāga* is the Path. By letting go, by relinquishing, all these things happen by themselves. But you especially understand *Nirodha*, the ending, the cessation of things. That is a very hard word to understand because we only know things that are there. It's hard to perceive something that is not there. Without understanding *Nirodha* we're especially unlikely to allow the possibility of that which we are truly attached to and cling to, to cease. It's always partial. Those things that we don't like, that we don't want, we can allow them to cease. But there are some parts of us that we do not want to give up, that we do not want to cease, that we do not want to disappear. This is where attachment and

clinging stops us from experiencing the fruits of cessation and understanding its meaning as an experience.

One of the insights that are most likely after a *jhāna* experience is the insight into the meaning of *Nirodha*, because this is one's first experience of anything absolutely vanishing and completely ceasing. The five senses that were there once are now, for a long period of time, no longer there. In the simile that I have given before about the television set, it's not just the program changing, it's the whole television set – which has been there as long as you can remember – disappearing. All you see are the programs on the screen, changing. Now for the first time in your memory the whole television set has completely vanished. It's completely gone, it is *Nirodha*. The very possibility of that was completely beyond you; you couldn't even conceive of that happening. But after a *jhāna* you know it has happened: you've been there and you've experienced the profoundness of cessation. That which was once impossible you have experienced. You've seen the five senses gone; you've seen the 'doer' gone. In the second *jhāna* you're completely, absolutely frozen. No *cetanā* (intention) is possible, no control at all. The mind is absolutely still, with a stillness you cannot conceive of. You cannot even imagine it.

Those *jhāna* states are weird, and that is why people who haven't had any experience of them they always fall flat on their faces when they try to explain them. They haven't got a clue what those things are. Once those states are experienced for what they truly are, then you can really see that something very big has gone, especially the going of the 'doer'. The 'doer' has been most of what you thought you were. That's what we call the 'house builder' in Buddhism. It's one of the biggest causes, if not *the* cause of rebirth. It's what keeps *saṃsāra* going – always building new houses, new tasks, new things to do – It makes the wheel go around. You see that 'doing' has completely, absolutely gone. You're just sitting there absolutely still, frozen, no 'doer'. Because there is no 'doer' that's the reason there's no movement – I really mean no movement – just one mind object for a long period of time without even a wobble or a shake, but life is still there . Once that is experienced and you emerge afterwards, you've seen something that you thought impossible: an absolute disappearing and going to cessation. That which you thought was an absolute you

realise is impermanent, and it can fade and actually end in peace. Once you can admit the possibility of such cessation then you can understand *anattā*. There is nothing substantial here because you know it can cease absolutely, completely. There is nothing remaining whatsoever, not even a cosmic or un-manifest consciousness. Cessation is cessation is cessation. If there was something left it wouldn't be called cessation.

Once you can see that from your own experience it gives you the fuel for the experience of Stream Winning, it gives you the seed. Cessation has happened and you can start to understand that what you took to be self, what you took to be me, what you took to be mine, is subject to cessation, it is *Nirodhadhamma*. You now know what *Nirodha* means. You know it applies to all the five senses, you know it applies to will, and it's only a small step to know that it applies to consciousness as well. That which you thought was you, the 'one who knows', ceases. It goes completely without any remainder. When you see that degree of *Nirodha* you have the opportunity to experience the Enlightenment experiences. You see the path of inclining towards cessation, not towards building up more things, more possessions, more thoughts, or more attainment's. Allow everything to cease by giving up, relinquishing, and letting go. You see how little one can live with. You see how few thoughts one can keep in one's mind. You see how little one can sleep, how little one can eat, how little one need talk, how little one need think. How much can you give up? After a while one inclines to giving up the whole lot. *Nirodha* happens, and you see that *Nirodha* is the highest happiness. It's well worth doing and then maybe you can have some idea of the fourth contemplation, *paṭinissagga*.

Paṭinissagga

Paṭinissagga is giving up, rejecting, or forsaking. I encourage the study of Pāli in this monastery because it does uncover some things that do not always come out in the translations. The word *paṭinissagga* you might recognise from the Vinaya, from the tenth, eleventh, twelve and thirteenth *saṅghādisesas*. *Paṭinissagga* is a noun. The verb for it, is *paṭinissajjati*, and it's used for a person who abandons their wrong course of action. In the tenth *saṅghādisesa* it is ceasing to cause a schism, in the eleventh giving up support for a schism, in the twelfth giving up the refusal to be admonished, and in

the thirteenth giving up the criticism of the act of banishment. The same word *paṭinissagga* is giving up views, ways of using the mind, thoughts, perceptions. It's abandoning on that level; it's not so much giving up material things such as your robe, your sugar, or worldly possessions, or for a layperson your money, car, etc.. This is giving up on the very deepest levels of cognition. We can give away many things in this life but what we find it hard to give up are those things that we call our mental possessions – our pride, our sense of self, our knowledge, and our sense of being someone who no one else can tread on, all those senses of an 'I'. That's what we find hard to abandon. But it has to be abandoned if one wishes to become Enlightened. The sense of self with all its ramifications – the stupidity, pride, and pain – creates more fire that burns you inside. It's called *dukkha*.

Please don't buy into all of that, allow it to fade, to cease. See if you can give up all of the aspects of self-view, so that when you do the reflection on *paṭinissagga* it's not the worldly material things that you are giving up, it's the things of the mind. You're abandoning, giving away, letting go of your past and future. In the *saṅghādisesa* rules a monk is asked in front of the Saṅgha three times to give something up, give that up, give that up, if you don't you incur the offence of *saṅghādisesa*. The Buddha is asking you to give up your sense of past and future, and if you don't give it up you get suffering. Give up your thinking, your thoughts; otherwise you get headaches. Give up all of your sense of control: of me and mine, my ideas, my rights, my will, my mind, and my plans – see if you can apply *paṭinissagga* to those. Have the courage and see what happens. What happens is that you become peaceful. These things are the stuff of fetters, the stuff of defilements, the stuff of craving. When you see that through contemplating *paṭinissagga* you are abandoning not just the outside world, you are abandoning the inside world. If you develop that *paṭinissagga* perception throughout the practice of meditation you'll find that meditation gets so easy. In the Indriya-Saṃyutta (SN. XLVIII. 9) there is a word that is very close to *paṭinissagga*, *vossagga* (relinquishing, giving up). The Sutta says that if you develop that mind of abandoning you very easily attain *samādhi*, you attain the *jhānas* easily.

Paṭinissagga, the perception of abandoning the inner thoughts, the inner ideas and the inner illusions, is a beautiful fast track to the deep meditations. See how much you

can give up, especially your ideas, your thoughts, and even some of the ways that you perceive. If you can do that you are applying the contemplation of *paṭinissagga* to developing deep meditation. After deep meditation contemplate *paṭinissagga* even further. You're abandoning all of those mental defilements: cravings, wrong views, wrong perceptions, and the wrong thoughts called the *vipallāsas*, the perversions of cognition, what we call *avijjā*, delusion. Abandoning your delusions you're giving them up, you're allowing them to cease until there's nothing there. If you can do that you can get on the path to deep insights, and you find that you can give up everything because there is nothing there anyway. There's nothing to keep, nothing worth holding on to. As the Lord Buddha said, *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya* (MN 37), that's beautiful. Again for those who know Pāli there is a related word *nivāsa*, it means lodging, or an abiding. I like to translate *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya*, as: all, everything completely, is not worth hanging out in, not worth making an abiding in, not worth making a home for the consciousness or for the 'doer'. It's usually translated as 'nothing is worth attaching to', which misses most of the meaning. When you understand the idea of *nivāsa* as a place where you abide, live, and create a home, and then you understand the full meaning and you understand why you can actually abandon everything. You understand why *paṭinissagga*, the abandoning of wrong thoughts, wrong views, wrong thinking, wrong use of the mind, is a path to both *jhānas* and *Nibbāna*.

Conclusion

So these are ways of using those four reflections at the end of the Ānāpānasati Sutta, *anicca*, *virāga*, *Nirodha*, and *paṭinissagga*. When the Buddha taught those reflections he meant them to be done extremely deeply, extremely beautifully, very powerfully, and very wonderfully. Unless you are an *Arahant* never think that you understand these words completely. That's why it's good to allow them to roll around in the mind, allow the mind to play around with them, allow the mind to recognise them. There may have been experiences in the past, in the long distant past, when you knew those words. They can resonate now and take you to the same territory, the territory of the *jhānas*, the territory of *maggaphala* (The Path and Fruit), the territory of peace. So play with those words especially after a deep meditation. They can lead you into *jhānas*; they can lead you into complete release

13 THE OUTFLOWINGS OF THE MIND

12th September 2000

When you go outside at this time of the year the full moon is very close. It's the second full moon of the rains retreat. Two months have passed since the start of the retreat and the mind should have slowed down by now. A lot of business has been got out of the way. Because of the continuous inclination of the mind towards peaceful states there should now be some experience of those peaceful states.

The Endless Task

The inclination of the mind is all-important. Very often the mind inclines in the wrong direction. It goes out into the world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. It even goes to thoughts about those experiences, to what we call the echoes of worldly life that happen in the thinking mind: dreams, fantasies and memories. With all of these we are observing the things of the world. In contrast, the inclination of the mind inwards is the way to develop the 'letting go' of the world. When we talk about the 'letting go' or the 'fading away' of the world, we can look at that from many different aspects. We understand how the inclination of the mind inwards brings the mind into a focus.

The inclination of the mind outwards is called *papañca* in Pāli. There are so many different things to do and so many different objects to pay attention to. It's the world of endless busyness. There's no end to that proliferation or the complexity of that world of *papañca*. On the other hand, the mind that inclines inwards into the present moment, the silence, the breath, the *nimmitta*, and the *jhānas*, is the mind which knows the end of *papañca*. The mind can know the end of proliferation, the end of busyness, and the end of complexity, as it gets closer to unity, to oneness.

The inclination of the mind inwards is one of the perceptions that can be developed in this monastery. Whenever you catch the mind going outwards it is a manifestation of what in the Dhamma we call the *āsavas*, the out-flowings of the mind. The *āsavas* come from the mind and go out to explore the world. That 'going out' to explore the world is where we get caught in *saṃsāra*; always wanting to experience new

sensations and new delights. Very often people in the world find that no matter where they travel, no matter where they go, or what they experience, there is always something more. So it's an endless task, an endless journey, if one follows the journey by going outwards into the world. However, by noticing that movement of the mind that goes outwards rather than inwards, one can know for oneself the meaning of this term *āsava* in Buddhism.

The Trouble Makers

The Buddha taught three *āsavas*: *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava*, and *avijjāsava*. *Kāmāsava* is the mind that goes out to the world of the five senses, or to their echoes in the mind, playing around, trying to find sustenance, trying to find satisfaction. Anyone with an ounce of wisdom should be able to know by now that no matter where you go in that world, there can never be satisfaction. There can never be peace. You can never be full of contentment. The very powerful simile that the Buddha gave for the world of the senses is that the world is forever burning; it promises so much but never gives you what it promises.

There is also the simile of the dog that is thrown a bone covered with blood. It's got the taste of food, the smell of food, but that bone smeared with blood cannot satisfy the dog's hunger. It tastes nice, it looks good, but in the end the dog is hungry, perhaps even more hungry and disappointed than it was at the beginning. And so it is with the sensory pleasures. The Buddha said sensory pleasures give you a little happiness, but a lot of dissatisfaction, a lot of trouble, and a lot of turmoil.

So, you should know that the *āsavas* that go out to play with the world of the five senses are troublemakers. They are things that take away the peace and contentment of the mind. The mind will never reach the goal because basically it is going in the wrong direction.

Bhavāsava goes out into the world just to prove existence. To justify existence, we have to do something, make something, and be somebody. If you ever find yourself going out into the world for that reason you should understand that it is another *āsava*, another out-flowing, which takes you away from the core, away from truth, and away

from peace. The will 'to be' is a form of *papañca* that creates much turmoil and many problems in our world. It takes you out to try and achieve some fame or status. It makes you defend yourself when you think that other people are criticising you. These are all the movements of the mind that try to say 'I am'. *Bhavāsava*, is taking you in the wrong direction. It's affirming existence, affirming being, rather than going in the opposite direction of 'letting go'.

With and *avijjāsava* the mind goes out because of delusion. It's stupid to want to go out into the world. How much do you need in this world? Sometimes as the abbot of a monastery I have to be very careful because if most of the monks in the monastery are *puthujjanas*, it's so easy for them to want more and more, whether it's heaters, coolers, or walking meditation paths. For example, sooner or later, when we have roads through the monastery, we might even be able to have meals on wheels and take the food to each monk's hut. Then you would only have to come outside to put your bowl out. You wouldn't even need to come to the *sālā* (hall). We could have a P.A. system for the chanting, so that you could chant *anumodanā* into a microphone and all the lay people could hear you. Whatever it is, *papañca* can do this endlessly, but it misses the point. The point is that trying to make everything comfortable, stable, and easy is just the mind going out into the world.

The Present Moment

It's so easy to make plans in the mind, to plan the perfect monastery, the perfect hut. It is so easy to plan the perfect hermitage, but that is going out into the world, that's *kāmāsava*. It's much better in a monastery such as this, which is comfortable enough as it is, to go into your hut as much as you can. You go into the hut and into simplicity. The Buddha taught *santuṭṭhi* as part of the gradual training. It means contentment with little, contentment with what you have. It doesn't matter if it's the best; it's good enough. What's the purpose of the food? What's the purpose of the hut? What's the purpose of all your requisites? The purpose is not to win an award for the best monastery in the world. The purpose of all this is not to have tourists coming around and saying how beautiful the monastery is, or how wonderful your hut is. The purpose of these requisites is to give you the opportunity to let go by providing the basic needs of the body, so that you don't need to be so concerned with

all that goes on outside. The whole purpose of a monastery such as this is to try and lessen the busyness of the world.

By following the *āsavas* into the world we make more busyness for others and for ourselves. But we can lessen that busyness by saying, 'this is good enough'. Your hut is good enough. The monastery is good enough and the walking path is good enough. Sure, it could be better but it's good enough. Doing that takes away a lot of the busyness in our lives. Sometimes we need to say, 'this day is good enough'. For those of you who are planning to leave this monastery after the rains retreat, you haven't left yet. That's in the far distant future. You may never leave. You may die in this monastery. All those plans and the mind going off into the future are a great waste of time. It is wasting the opportunity to practise today, because you are busy planning for tomorrow.

Often we do not have enough time in our lives, but the reason why people haven't enough time is because they throw time away. The way of practice in a monastery is to do walking meditation and sitting meditation most of the time. When walking, don't waste the time by thinking of things that don't really concern you. I'm talking here about the thoughts of tomorrow or the next day. Even thoughts of later on in the evening don't really concern you. The only thing that concerns you is the present moment and what's happening now. Try and go into that present moment more and more.

People have sometimes told me that they have a problem with present moment awareness. They are not quite sure what they should be aware of, what they should be focussing on, or what they should be doing. It's just a matter of being acquainted with what that present moment really is. Once you make a good acquaintance with the present moment it's easy to focus on it. If you're not quite sure what it is, or you feel uncomfortable, then of course it will be difficult.

Notice that the *āsavas* that flow out of the mind, away from the 'here and now', always seeking for something else, are a force in the mind, a movement of the mind. You can ask the question, 'Why does my mind want to flee from the present moment, from what it has right now, from this? Why does my mind want to go fleeing off into

the future, to fantasies, to the past, or to dreams? Why does it want to do this? What's wrong with this present moment?' That which is going out doesn't even know what the present moment is. You see that the mind is not looking in the right direction. It's not looking inwards at what's here. The mind is looking outwards to what might be. That's called craving and craving is always blind. It's blind to what you have and it only sees what's missing or what you might have in the future. That's the delusive part of craving.

Ill will is the same. When you're angry with someone you do not realise what your mind is like. You are just worrying about the thing or the person over there. The mind is going out. It forgets what's inside. A very effective and beautiful way to stop that type of outgoing mind is to notice the movement, the flow of consciousness out into the world, onto the person or the object of your anger. Notice the mind going out to the future, to the past, into fantasies and dreams, and the world of thoughts. You will realise you've missed the point, the point of the 'now', the inner point of the mind. As soon as you recognise that movement of the mind, it is quiet easy to turn that current of consciousness around. Instead of going out into the world and searching and reaching out you can turn the mind inwards.

Going Against the Stream

What is doing the reaching out? What's hearing? What's feeling? What's seeing? What is it that's saying, thinking, and doing? To find that out you have to go inwards. In Pāli the word for wise attention is *yoniso manasikāra*; it literally means the work of the mind that goes to the source. The *yoni* is the womb, the origin. It doesn't go out into the world; it goes in where this world is coming from or where this mind is coming from. The mind is similar to a soldier fighting the enemies of craving and desire. Where does all of this actually come from? *Yoniso manasikāra* goes in the opposite direction to the *āsavas*. It goes against the stream, against the flow of the world. That's the reason why the metaphor of going against the stream is a very common one in the Dhamma taught by the Lord Buddha.

The Buddha taught us to go against the stream of craving, against the *āsavas*, against the movement of the mind to the sensory world, and the world of being, and instead to

go inwards, in the opposite direction. It takes a lot of training to be able to do that. That is the training in the five *indriyas*, especially the first *indriya*, confidence and faith, *saddhā*. Confidence and faith also means having patience, giving it time, giving it all the time it needs. If you read the Theragāthā, you will find that some of the monks, for instance Anuruddha, spent many, many years practising before they became Stream Winners. It took them many more years before they became *Arahants*. These were great monks with the best of teachers, the Lord Buddha himself. It took them a long time, but they had patience and persistence and *anyone with patience and persistence must reach the goal eventually*. If you have faith, *saddhā*, it's only a matter of time before you see that what the Buddha taught is true. If you have confidence that there are *Ariyas* in the world, and you have confidence in them, then you know that if you practise the Eightfold Path it leads to *Nibbāna*. If you're practising the Eightfold Path, and following the instructions, you know where it leads. It's only a matter of time.

It's not up to you. It's a process, a condition, cause and effect. It's wonderful when you realize *anattā* (no-self) and realize that it's not up to the person. It's just a process independent of any ego or any self. So whether you say, "I can't do it", "I can do it", "I'm up to it", "I'm not up to it", the 'I' doesn't come into it. It's a process, that's all. All the conditions are here for you, so it's only a matter of time. Having that sort of confidence, having that sort of faith, is what powers the mind to go against the stream, against the out-flowings, and instead go inwards.

The Russian Dolls

The tendency of people is to go out into the world. When any problem arises in their practice or their meditation, they blame something outside of themselves, like the teacher, the monastery, this monk, that *anagārika*, the food, the climate, or even their bodies. That's just going out into the world again. Don't go out into the world, instead go inside. One can always go 'in' no matter what the problem or difficulty is. Don't go out to the problem. Go against the stream, *yoniso manasikāra*, go inwards. What is experiencing the problem? What is making this decision? What is this 'doer'? What is this 'knower'? Going inside is going in the right direction and you should understand that the going inwards is precisely the path of meditation which is

taught here. Going into the present moment, going into the silence, which is right in the centre of the present moment.

If you're clearly, perfectly present you haven't the time to say anything. All speech is about what has just happened or about what might happen next. You can't say anything about what's happening now. So, to gain that silence, I just cultivate present moment awareness, cultivating it and refining it until it becomes silent. Silence just arises right in the centre of 'present moment awareness' and that silence is like a huge room into which I invite the breath. I don't go out to the breath. That again is an *āsava*; a movement of the mind. If you go out to the breath, you'll find the breath is uncomfortable and difficult to perceive. If you can make the mind go inwards to the present moment, inwards into the silence, and then invite the breath in you'll find the breath will come in by itself. It'll be in the room of silence. You're actually going into the centre of that silent room where the breath lives.

With each of these stages of meditation, the next stage arises from the very centre of the stage you are in now. You don't need to go on to something else. You don't need to get rid of this experience now. You don't need to suppress the *āsavas* or encourage the mind to go onto the next stage, 'Come on, go quicker, achieve more, come on, go on'. That's the wrong direction. Go inwards with no craving and no desire for something else. Just develop contentment, letting go as you go inwards, into the breath, not out to the breath.

If you have that inclination to go inwards, that which is experiencing the breath gets closer to the centre. You're letting go of this external outward shell of existence. You're letting go of the body. You've already let go of the world outside. Imagine this inner world as a series of concentric shells, like the famous Russian dolls, one inside of the other. You have the world outside and in the middle of that is your body. Get rid of the body and in the middle of that is the breath. In the middle of the breath is the *nimmitta*. All we are doing is going inwards. So if any of you have had trouble, wondering what to do when you're concentrated on the breath, just nudge the mind inwards a little more. Direct the mind inwards, into this experience, inwards into this moment, further into the silence, further into the breath. When you really get into that a lot of pleasure and happiness arise. It's just the pleasure and happiness that

arise with the release of that world outside. It is happiness that arises from the release of this body and the five senses. You have to go right inside this body to find that release. You won't find it outside.

Once you've trained yourself in the direction of always going inward, looking inward, going into your hut, into your meditation, into the moment, into the silence, into the breath, you very easily get into the 'beautiful breath'. It's natural to have this happen when you're going in the correct direction. If, when you get to the breath, you're neither going inwards nor outwards but just staying with that breath, it won't develop anymore. So try and go inwards to the present moment, closer to the silence. With the mind going inwards you soon get to the 'beautiful breath'. It's only a matter of time before you go right into the centre of that beautiful breath. The breath is like one of those soft centred chocolates: the sweet part, the happiness of the breath, lies right in the centre of it. As you go to the centre, the breath disappears. The simile that I give in meditation retreats is the one about meditators being tested for their concentration by having to shoot an arrow through the eye of a stuffed bird. The last student is being asked by the meditation master, "Can you see the bird in the tree?"
"What tree?"
"Can you see the bird?"
"What bird?"
"What can you see then?"
"I can only see one eyeball."

He'd focussed so much inwards that all he could see, his only field of perception, was the target.

Now you can go even further inwards. By being with the 'beautiful breath', go into the beauty. The beauty is *pītisukha*. You can't stop there; you have to go right into the *pītisukha*, falling inwards. That's the experience of many people who get a *nimmitta* and then enter a *jhāna*. You fall into the centre of the beautiful light of the *nimmitta*, letting it embrace and go all around you, staying there, and even going deeper. You are always inclining inwards, until you go through all the *jhānas*. You go so far in that you get to the very heart of things, to cessation. Then you will know

that the core of all this is 'emptiness'. There is no 'self', there is no 'doer', and there is no 'knower'. There is only empty phenomena rolling along.

Know the Truth

Going right inwards, you get insight. You don't get insights in the realm of the five senses and the world outside. You don't get insights by just watching the breath. You get insights when you see deeply into the very heart, the very centre of all of this. One inclines deeper and sees the beautiful cessation, which is a wonderful experience. People in the world are afraid of cessation because they think of it as destruction, as annihilation, not understanding or appreciating its beauty. That's the reason some people in the world, if they have only a little understanding of Buddhism, think of it as like suicide or death. But those people who have practised the path and know the truth, know that as one gets deeper and deeper, more profundity, joy, and happiness are experienced.

The *āsavas* cause *dukkha*. They are *dukkha*. They are suffering. They are going out into the world making busyness for you. It's like going out into a fire, into a storm, or into the cold and the wind and the rain. It's going out from the cosy comfortable place within yourself. The more you can go inwards, the more happiness you will feel, and that gives you a marvellous understanding of the power of the Four Noble Truths and how deep their meaning is. The deeper one goes inwards, and the more one goes against the *āsavas*, the more happiness and pleasure one experiences, and the more one will be inclined to go deeper and deeper on the path of ever increasing happiness. After a while it is not a path of struggle or a path which requires much effort, because the inclination to go deeper becomes a causal process and is self-sustaining.

One goes inwards more and more deeply just for the happiness of it, for the sheer profundity of it. Each one of you who've gone deep inside, gone against the *āsavas*, know that the deeper you've gone the more peaceful, joyful, and more profound the experience is. You've come closer to truth and wisdom. You know that is the path. There is some insight, some wisdom in the mind, that knows that that's the way to go. It is *yoniso manasikāra*, the mind working to go deeper and deeper inwards. Cultivate

that. Incline towards that. Don’t cultivate and incline towards the world outside. So many people have done that and just wasted their time. Cultivate the inner yearning, the inner abidings, and the movement of the mind against the *āsavas*. When you go that deep, and find there’s nothing there, you will have cut off the very root of the *āsavas* and also the reason why you go out into the world. You will have cut off the *avijjāsava*, the cause of the out-flowings, the illusion of a ‘self’ – the ‘me’ that has to do something in this world, engage with the world, and justify its existence in the world by ‘doing’ and ‘achieving’. When you can cut that off then the mind will always incline against the world and go inwards.

So remember the meaning of the *āsavas*. Understand them as movements of the mind which go out into the world. Notice when those *āsavas* are there in your mind. See if you can counteract them by developing and training yourself to be a person who inclines inwards, into more solitude, into more seclusion, into the present moment, into the subtle breath, into more silence, into more bliss, into emptiness.

Cut off those *āsavas* and then you’ll be free.

14 STARVING THE TIGER TO DEATH

Overcoming the Defilements

1st November 2000

It doesn't matter what time of the year it is – before, after, or during the rains retreat – you should always remember that we are here for one reason only: to end suffering and to find the truth that the Buddha sought. We should all have enough faith to realise that this is only done by training the mind. Especially by training the mind firstly to know, and then to weaken and fully overcome, what the Buddha called the *kilesas*, the defilements of the mind.

The Guardian of the Mind

If I think back in time and remember the teachings of Ajahn Chah, Ajahn Mahā Boowa, and all the other great forest monks in the North East of Thailand, I recall that in every talk they spoke about the *kilesas* and how much they affect human beings, creating suffering again and again – immediately, later on, and in the next life. So as monks, instead of getting high over the finer aspects of the Dhamma and talking about emptiness, *jhānas*, Dependent Origination, and non-manifest consciousness, or whatever, it's good to bring yourself back to reality and look at the *kilesas* in your mind.

The biggest of the *kilesas* are *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha,* which can be translated as greed, hatred, and delusion. Delusion is the mind which thinks it's doing something right but is actually doing something wrong. That is, it encourages more defilements, which encourages more heat in the mind, and that is not conducive to the path. It doesn't lead to liberation and it doesn't lead to other people having faith in what you are doing.

The only thing that can really oppose that delusion is a sense of *hiri-ottappa* accompanied by mindfulness. *Hiri-ottappa* is the sense of shame. The shame of doing something that is inappropriate, knowing that it is going to create suffering for

you and for others. Just look at what you are doing and why you are doing it, and consider if it is the sort of thing that a monk, a disciple of the Buddha should be doing? Is this something that a novice should be doing? Is this something that an *anagārika* or even a visitor to the monastery should be doing? Is it something that *you* should be doing? If someone saw you doing this, what would they say? How would they look at it?

To practice *hiri-ottappa* means your morality has to be good. Your ethics and your monastic precepts have to be so good that even if you had a video camera following you around for twenty-four hours a day, it would never find anything in your conduct which would cause you a sense of shame. It would never even find anything in your mind that lay-people would find fault with. It means that if you could take out all the thoughts and the moods of the mind so that you could show them to your fellow monastics, you wouldn't be ashamed of them. That's the training you should be doing. *Hiri-ottappa* should be fully developed because it is the guardian for your conduct.

Your position as a monk is not just for your own liberation, it's also for inspiring faith in others. I take that extremely seriously as a teacher and especially in my position as an abbot. I've seen so many monks in whom I had faith for awhile, who I thought were doing marvellous things, giving wonderful talks, and then they misbehaved. That really hurt me quite badly. If it was not for the fact that I have enormous faith in the Dhamma I probably wouldn't have even managed to become a monk, because those monks were saying one thing and doing another. So there was a hypocrisy there, which really hurt me. Unfortunately that has often happened in Western countries.

When a monk goes around talking about the restraint of the senses, simplicity, frugality, and meditation, but then does the opposite, it hurts people who see it. What would his friends in the holy life and the people who support him say? That sense of shame should hurt the monk as well. When you develop this sense of shame there are some things which just don't feel right. You know they are wrong, you know they are

inappropriate for a monk to be doing. With a strong sense of *hiri-ottappa* you've got a chance of fighting these defilements of the mind. If your *hiri-ottappa* is very weak you won't have a feeling for what monastic life is about.

Clearing Away the Distractions

Forest monasteries have changed from the time when I was a young monk. For example, we were just talking this evening about the fact that some of the quite remote forest monasteries, that are close enough to Bangkok, get enormous amounts of drinks and all sorts of edibles for the afternoons. Someone asked me, 'What did you have on the drink tray when you first became a monk?' I answered quite accurately, 'There wasn't a drink tray'. When I first went to Wat Pah Pong – this was before Wat Pah Nanachat was started – it was a long time before we had anything to drink in the afternoons. It was months before I even saw a bag of sugar and there wasn't any coffee. I remember once a visitor came and gave a small jar of coffee to one of the novice monks; it was the first time we had seen anything like that in months. That was what the forest tradition was like.

That sort of simplicity and frugality is encouraged for a purpose. It is to clear away as many distractions as possible so that you have a chance to see the mind and to understand, reduce, and overcome the defilements. Unfortunately sometimes even in this monastery some people seem intent on making more distractions and as a result they give me more to do. There needs to be a sense of *hiri-ottappa*. The Buddha once said to Upāli, 'Whatever certainly leads to *Nibbidā*, to the turning away from the world of the senses, to the fading away of the world of the six senses, that is the Dhamma'. These are words that guide me in my monastic life; Words that tell me what I should be doing and what I shouldn't be doing. They tell me what's Dhamma and what isn't Dhamma. It's Dhamma if it leads to cessation, the ending of things, and that beautiful emptiness that comes with the ending of things.

The ending of things leads to *upasama,* the settling down of the mind, to peace, quiet, and silence. *Sambodhi* is Enlightenment wisdom. *Nibbāna* is the complete going out

of this flame of doing, the end of being concerned and interested in playing around in that world. If what you are doing leads to those things, if it's pointing in those directions, then you can know that this is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, and this is the teaching of the Buddha.

I heard of a nun who went on a very long retreat, and then when she came off the retreat she started listening to music. I thought 'hang on, what are you doing?' That's just looking for delight in the five senses. That's not something that leads to *Nibbidā*, to turning away, to fading away. It doesn't lead to cessation, it doesn't lead to the quieter states of mind, and it doesn't lead to *Nibbāna,* to Enlightenment. It goes in the wrong direction. The Buddha's advice to Upāli – who was originally a barber – was enough for him to know what was appropriate and what was not appropriate for a monk to do. It gave him guidelines to develop *hiri ottappa* and he became an *Arahant*, as well as a Vinaya expert.

So we look at these teachings and use them to overcome the delusion and the misunderstanding about what we are supposed to be doing and then we can understand what the Dhamma is and who's teaching correct Dhamma. Using the standard that the Buddha gave Upāli – which he also gave to Mahāpājapatī Gotamī the first Bhikkhunī – is extremely powerful and it shows us what these *kilesas* really are. Keep it in mind and follow it. Once you have the idea of following the Buddha's teachings to overcome the coarser part of delusion, it becomes much harder for you to justify acts of greed and anger. Often you see people in the world who have these defilements of hatred, ill will, and sensory desire, and they keep justifying them all the time. They say, 'It's good to get angry', or 'They need to be told' and, 'It's good to have fun now and again and to enjoy this and enjoy that'. It gets to the point that people claim "It's the 'kitchen sink path to Enlightenment. You don't need to be a monk or a nun; you can just be in the world, enjoy your family and your job and become Enlightened". As they say in English, that's just trying to 'have your cake and eat it too'. Once you've eaten your cake it's gone, it's disappeared; you can't eat your cake and keep it at the same time. You've got a choice: to preserve it for later on or eat it now. You can't have it both ways.

When a person really understands what the Buddha was talking about, when they understand that there is a way to overcome the defilements of the mind and to become Enlightened, then they won't waste time with the *kilesas*. The defilements stop you from enjoying peace of mind, and they stop you enjoying the liberation of the mind. They prevent wisdom from arising and you just get stuck in *saṃsāra* for many, many more lifetimes. So we've got to do something about these defilements and not just allow them to be. Don't justify them. Know very clearly that the Buddha said that sensory desire is defilement. Sensory desire is pursuing enjoyment in the realm of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. That is not part of the middle way.

When the Buddha taught the middle way between the two extremes, the first extreme was *kāmasukhallikānuyoga*. Here *anuyoga* means attachment, getting into, pursuing, or having a lot to do with. *Kāmasukha* is the happiness of the five senses, including sexuality, food, and entertainment. And that's certainly not the middle way: the Buddha said that it doesn't lead to *Nibbāna*; it leads to more *dukkha,* more suffering. I always have to quote the Buddha because I'm just a monk, just Ajahn Brahm. Who will believe me if I say these things? So, I quote from the sources and that gives what I am saying a bit more authority. I think many of you have heard the great teachers of our tradition say the same things. That's why as disciples of the forest tradition, you should always keep in mind Ajahn Chah, and Ajahn Tate. These are the monks I knew. What do they say? What did they do? How would they act? Asking those questions keeps me in line. If ever I were about to do something I was not sure about, I would think, 'Well what would Ajahn Chah do? What would Ajahn Tate do?' I was around those monks – especially Ajahn Chah – for long enough. I knew what they would do and how they would do it. If it was something they would never do, then I don't want to do it either. That's a sort of *hiri ottappa*. That's what happens when you are around a good teacher for a long time: you know certain things are not right. This is the way you understand *kāmasukha,* the pleasure of the senses.

Ajahn Chah would never allow indulgence in *kāmasukha*, he would never encourage or praise that at all. You can see in the *suttas* that neither did the Buddha, because

lobha, the first *kilesa*, means greed or covetousness – getting involved in, pursuing, and indulging in the pleasures of the five senses. If any of you are Pāli experts, you will know that *lobha* is a synonym for *avijjā* or ignorance, a synonym for *kāmacchanda*, the desire for sensual pleasure. It's the foremost hindrance that weakens wisdom and blocks *samādhi*. And, because it blocks *samādhi*, it means you are just putting yourself behind a large obstacle. It's hard enough as it is to get the peaceful states of mind that lead into *samādhi*.

Just Being Inside

We've just finished the rains retreat and many of you have been trying very hard, putting a lot time into developing and creating peaceful states of mind. If you throw away all that good work now you'll just have to start from scratch again. So often we can see those defilements of the mind and yet we justify them by saying, 'It's okay, we can do this, it's alright', but we know we really shouldn't. So when you do see defilements like *lobha* coming up, at least don't act on them. Don't do anything. *Don't turn it into an action of body and speech*. If you confine it to the world of the mind so that it just stays as a thought, as a mood, you are weakening its fuel, its source. As soon as you act on it, it becomes much stronger psychologically and it's more liable to come back again in the future. Also, if you can just keep it in the mind you've got more of a chance to understand it, especially to understand its pain.

If you have anger in the mind you know what it feels like. But if you take that anger out on someone else you forget what *you* feel like because you're only focussed on that other person. It's just the same with sensory desire. If you keep it inside you can feel what it's like, you can know what it's like. But if you externalise it by trying to gain that object of the sensory desire, you've lost all the mindfulness of what's happening inside. You've just gone out into the world and you're not quite sure what is happening in your mind, you can't see the danger in these things; you can't see the negative result of following the defilements. Instead of externalising it into that being or that thing or that person, spend some time just being inside and knowing what it feels like when you've got desire for sensory enjoyment. Do the same when you're

getting angry and upset. This way you will see the danger in sensory pleasures and ill will.

Because we don't see the danger in these things, when we experience suffering, we don't understand why we are suffering. Why am I upset? Why am I not happy? Why am I sick? Why am I doing this? Why is my meditation not going well? Why can't I get into *jhānas* ? You know why! It is because you have no sense restraint and you indulge yourself too much. You allow the defilements, the *kilesas* to run riot in the mind. Once the *kilesas* have got hold of you they are not going to just let you go. You can't say, 'Right, I'm going to let you go now, it's my two weeks retreat. Okay? So *kilesas*, just leave me alone!' Once you've started a fire you can't stop it so easily. That's why the Buddha encouraged people to keep the precepts perfectly. See danger in the slightest fault. Keep the rules of the monastery perfectly, practise sense restraint, and be content with little. Be content with your hut, your robes; it doesn't matter whether they are synthetic or cotton. Just have simple requisites, nothing really flash and just a few of them.

Living Simply

Some of you will soon be leaving and going overseas. It will be very interesting to see how many bags you are taking. See if you can be like a monk at the time of the Buddha, just carrying your bowl and robes. See how little you can carry. Ask yourself, 'What do I want all this stuff for? When I go through the airport terminals will I just look like another tourist in funny clothes or am I going to look like a monk, someone who lives simply, someone who can inspire others?' Many lay-people have pointed out to me over the years that, when they see a monk coming to Perth with big cases or big bags, they feel disappointed, especially a few times when they've seen monks coming with their computers. They've said that their hearts drop, because this is not the way a monk should be. Even recently I heard a comment by one of the Thai lay-people about these sorts of monks. He thought monks shouldn't have so many things. It was one of the reasons he thought that the *sāsana*, the teaching of the Buddha, and the Saṅgha in Thailand were becoming so corrupt. They've got too many things. They're being given too much. They should live more simply.

Living simply should be one's goal, one's intention. When I went on *tudong* after five years as a monk, I had to carry everything with me. I had to walk out of the monastery – not get a car to the airport, but walk with all the belongings I had. There was a rule in that monastery at that time (it's probably changed now because monasteries get more and more slack; the standard goes down and so does the standard of *samādhi*) that once you left the monastery you couldn't leave anything behind. You couldn't put it in the storeroom and say, 'Can you put this aside for me, I'll be back in a year' or 'put it in the room somewhere over there and if I need it I will send for it'. You really had to let go of everything, all your possessions. Whatever you thought was yours, you had to take with you. You could give as much away as you wanted, but what you took, you had to carry. And you had to walk with it, sometimes for twenty or thirty kilometres a day in Thailand. Even in the cold season it is still hot for walking. You very soon start to see how little you need. I thought I was really down to the minimum but, after walking for two or three days more, I found there were a few more things I could get rid of. After two or three days walking you get it down to a very light pack. The first thing I gave away before I went on *tudong* was the big bag in which my bowl was carried. The reason was that I already had a bag for my bowl: just the little crocheted thing which goes on the outside of the bowl. What do I need another bag for? Another bag just means I can put more things in it. So when I was on *tudong* I didn't have a bowl bag, I just put everything in my monk's shoulder bag and in my metal bowl. The umbrella with the mosquito net and the water bottle were strapped to my back and that was it. It was a marvellous feeling – a feeling of pride, not in the sense of ego, but in the sense of inspiration that one could do this. It was possible to do this and be close to the *tudong* monks of old. The ones who would go through the forests of Thailand: the Ajahn Mun's, the Ajahn Chah's, the Ajahn Juan's, all those great monks. They didn't have lots of stuff to carry. They did not have lay-people going with them to carry things. They would go out by themselves. That's a monk in the lineage of the Buddha – like a bird carrying only the weight of its wings. So those of you, who are going soon, you may have already started packing and getting all your stuff together, but see what you can actually leave behind. It's a challenge for you. See how much you can do without; you can always do without a bit more. That's simplicity.

You will find simplicity means that you are not spending so much time with this requisite or with that requisite, making it more beautiful, more fashionable, or whatever else. It was crazy sometimes in the early years of Wat Pah Nanachat. Even though the monks were supposed to be beyond these things, every now and then someone would make a new design for a bowl stand and some monks would be throwing away their old bowl stands and making a new one because of fashion. They wanted this new type of stand or the new type of mosquito net. It was shameful. It really came to me when 'Tupperware' started to become popular. One of the monks was sent a little Tupperware cup with a lid on it by his mother, so you could drink half of it and take half of it back to your hut. This was a couple of years after Wat Pah Nanachat was started when there were drinks available in the afternoon. In those days when you had a drink it was made in a big kettle and then passed down the row. Then somebody decided to get a bigger cup. So some people had a small size and some had a bigger size. And in a couple of weeks a few other monks had the next size up. I remember one monk had this huge Tupperware cup; it was more like a bowl than a cup. It was just amazing what the monks would get up to. It meant that because someone had this huge cup sometimes the monks at the end of the line wouldn't get anything. The drink would run out before the end of the line, it was gross. But sometimes defilements are like that: always wanting bigger, better, and more rather than less.

The way of a monk should be simpler and smaller, not more extravagant. A monk should be someone who, if a thief goes into his room, there is nothing worth stealing. A monk shouldn't have anything of great worth, that's what being a forest monk is really about.

A monk depends on alms. If there is a person in the community who is poorer than you then you should think that is not right. I remember that because of the conditioning of my parents and also my grandparents. I started feeling that it was wrong when huts being built in the monastery in Thailand were more comfortable than some of the ones that the villagers were living in. I thought, 'It's not right; these

villagers are feeding me and I'm living in a more comfortable hut. If I've got more resources than they have I should be feeding them'. It gave me a sense of *hiri ottappa* about how I was using resources. How are you using resources? Is it an expression of the defilements? Is it an expression of the *kilesas* – of *lobha, dosa, moha,* but especially *lobha*, the desire for material things? Even monks can desire material things, the latest this or the latest that. So, you should try and live simply. Forget about the comforts of the body, the comforts of the hut, the comforts of this way or that way.

We need to develop the comforts of the mind not the comforts of the body. It's a waste of time worrying about this old body. So, as long as we've got the requisites – a robe to cover our body, and it doesn't have to be the best quality cloth, it can be full of patches –that's good enough. As long as we've got a hut to stay in – again, it doesn't have to be the best, as long as it keeps away the elements and gives seclusion for the practise of meditation, that's good enough. If you have a good hut to stay in, hang out in it, instead of hanging out in the kitchen or the workshop or somewhere else. We have beautiful huts in this monastery, probably some of the best huts in any monastery in the world. So stay in them, make use of them. Otherwise all the people who have spent all this money, donating to the monastery to build these beautiful huts, what merit are they getting out of it? Sometimes you should ask yourself, 'Do I deserve to stay in a hut like this?' These huts cost a lot of money. If you are not practising properly, not walking on those meditation paths regularly, what have you done to earn this? If you're healthy you should be walking on them a lot, and if you are only reasonably healthy, you should be sitting down inside your hut doing a lot of meditation. Make use of these things so that the sacrifice of the people who built the hut will be worth while. So they can look at the gift that they have given, see how it is being used, and feel inspired and happy.

This is a way of overcoming the defilement of laziness, the defilement of just taking things easy in a beautiful hut. The defilement of just sitting around having a big breakfast, having a big lunch, having a big cup of tea, coffee, or whatever else you think you want. All these things can be used, but use them well. Use them frugally –

use them to make progress in your meditation and to develop your wisdom. Otherwise, you'll just be like a lay-person in robes, with the same sort of desires, the same sort of hatreds, and the same sorts of movements of the mind. If you develop a lay-person's mind you won't want to stay in the robes – you will want to leave because you haven't been developing the monk's mind, the mind of a *samaṇa*, a recluse. Eventually that will get the better of you.

Those are some of the dangers of the defilements. That's why a Kruba Ajahn would stop those dangers developing. They would tell you what happens if you develop lust, if you fantasize, sleep too much, eat too much, or if you don't spend enough time sitting, or practising sense restraint. They would point out the dangers again and again.

Sometimes what motivates people are the benefits of resisting the defilements, of overcoming the *kilesas*. Because if you start to resist these *kilesas*, the defilements of the mind, you get more and more happiness. You get *anavajja sukha* (complete, spotless happiness) as you start to keep your precepts and the rules of the monastery perfectly. You realise that there is no cause for blame from any quarter in anything you've done. Each one of you can do that now. Have you got the blameless happiness of *anavajja sukha* yet? Or are there still parts of your ethical conduct that still need to be tightened up a bit? If so, you're just depriving yourself of happiness. So, one of the benefits of keeping the precepts and following the rules of the monastery is that you get this beautiful sense of happiness, freedom from remorse, from *kukkucca,* one of the five hindrances. With that freedom from remorse your meditation gets deeper and you get even more happiness from the practise of sense restraint. If you practise sense restraint you get to the next level of happiness in the gradual training. So by indulging in sitting around or standing around chatting about this, about that, or just reading too many trashy books, you're stopping yourself from getting the happiness of sense restraint.

The happiness of sense restraint means that the mind starts to calm down and you get this beautiful peacefulness inside you and around you. You've all experienced that

peacefulness from time to time. Sometimes you only experience it when you are on retreat and then when you come off the retreat you throw it away again. Wouldn't it be wonderful to just keep that peacefulness and joy from sense restraint all the time? If you really want to indulge in the senses then you can volunteer to go into town at the weekends and I can stay here and do my meditation. You can give the talks if you like talking a lot. I might just put you in front of the microphone at our town centre and you can talk. What I'm saying here is that you've got this marvellous opportunity: you don't have to give talks, you don't have to talk so much. When I had just two 'Rains' I had to give talks. I'm not sure which but after the third or fourth 'Rains', I had to give the *Mahāpūjā* service in Thai at Wat Pah Pong, with Ajahn Chah and a couple of hundred monks and thousands of lay-people there. That was too soon, but I had to do it because Ajahn Chah told me to. In other monasteries you have to do these things. Even those monks who say they don't like to do these things, when they go overseas they have to give talks. You're lucky to have so much freedom, so don't waste that time. Use it not to indulge but to really get into seclusion.

Kāyaviveka is seclusion of the body, c*ittaviveka* is seclusion of the mind. Seclusion of the body means getting away from other people: sitting in your hut, walking on your path, and hanging out with yourself. *Vivicca kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehī*, being aloof, separated, secluded from unwholesome dhamma, which usually means the five hindrances, including the *kilesas*, of greed, hatred, delusion, and sensory desire. When you are in the hut there is nothing much there; that's why it's a place of seclusion. You need to keep it that way, keep it simple with few things. Keep your hut so simple that I can take a visitor there any time and you would expect the visitor to be impressed with the little you have, and how neat and tidy it is. You should be aiming for the simplicity of a forest monk. I have mentioned many times before what a great privilege it was to see Ajahn Chah's room; it gave you so much delight. Even now I remember there was so little in that hut. Here was a monk who was receiving all these gifts from wealthy people in Bangkok and Ubon, but where he slept there was hardly anything at all. A few robes, a mat on the floor, a little pillow and that was all. It was beautiful and inspiring to see that. So if I take a visitor to your hut, will they be as inspired as I was when I was a young monk?

By developing seclusion from all these material and physical possessions, simplifying the mind instead of filling it with more stuff, we get happiness of the mind, freedom of the mind, and the joy of the mind. You're actually getting close to the *jhānas*, seclusion from the five senses. Secluded from unwholesome things you can enter into the first *jhāna* with *pītisukha*, the bliss of such seclusion. The *jhānas* are states of bliss. Don't throw away the opportunity to get that bliss. By having insight into the Dhamma you'll turn your whole life around, especially your monastic life. Remember, just before he sat down under the Bodhi tree the Buddha reflected on the time when he first experienced a *jhāna* under the rose apple tree. He thought, 'Could the *jhānas* be the way to Enlightenment and then insight came up, 'Yes, *jhānas* are the way to Enlightenment'. It's a powerful statement. Afterwards he knew the middle way; the middle way is the *jhāna* way. When you let go of sensory pleasures, get rid of the *kāmasukhalliānuyoga*, (the pursuit of the happiness of sensual pleasure*s*), have no *kāma sukha*. That's straight down the line *jhāna* practice. So don't throw away the opportunity and the chance to do this. This is what leads to Enlightenment. This is the path that the Buddha followed. And for those of you who have faith in the Kruba Ajahns, all of those Kruba Ajahns – to the best of my knowledge – said that such *samādhi* is absolutely necessary to gain Enlightenment.

Overcoming the Defilements

So use this wonderful opportunity in this lifetime, this rare lifetime. Most of you have healthy bodies, and if they're not absolutely healthy they're still good enough to practise. You have the teachings available to you, to encourage you. You're protected from having to deal with too many lay-people. You've good food and all the resources here, so don't just indulge in the defilements. The benefit of resisting those defilements is that they get less and less. Keep them confined to the mind and it's just like putting a tiger in a cage. It might roar and rush against the cage bars at the very beginning but after a while it will stop doing that. It will settle down in the cage and then it will be safe. You'll be safe from being terrorised and eaten by the tigers of the defilements. Eventually, when they're in a cage you can starve them to death – starve them so that they get weaker and weaker and the bliss gets stronger and

stronger. When the mind is blissed out and has that sort of strength, it can kick that tiger in the teeth and the tiger is too weak to do anything. You've got hold of the defilements and you can wring their necks. No more defilements and you get Enlightenment in this lifetime. Each one of you has the possibility to do that, but if you keep indulging in defilements you're just wasting precious time. I'm talking about wasting this precious lifetime. When you know the dangers of these things you will be encouraged to make a bit more effort to resist, to have a bit more *hiri ottappa* and more determination to overcome them.

In the simile of the two fire sticks (MN 36), even if we take the sticks out of the river, they are still wet so we can't start a fire with them. Even if those fire sticks have been lying next to the river, still they're not dry enough – they are too wet inside. They have to be taken from the river for a long time before they dry out, before they can be used to light a fire. The Lord Buddha used that simile for indulging in sensory pleasure in the world of the senses. If you have just left the world and come to the monastery, it takes awhile before you dry out. The sensory world makes you damp and meditation can't really take hold. You can't get really fired up with the meditation. The longer you are outside of the world, away from things, staying in a monastery or in a hermitage, the more you dry out. Sometimes it takes years to dry out. Especially when you are drying out and then you put your stick in the water and make it wet again. So after a couple of years of drying out, if you make it all wet again you have to do another two years, four years, or however long it takes to dry out. You're just holding yourself back, not allowing yourself the opportunity to get into deep meditation. Once those sticks are aflame, once you get into the *jhānas* and the bliss, you'll also have clarity of mind and you'll see how stupid the defilements are. You'll just kick yourself, 'Why on earth did I do those sorts of things when I was a young and stupid monk? To go and find pleasure in the realm of the five senses – what a stupid, silly thing to do! Wasting my time looking out into the world too much. Listening too much; listening to Mozart or whatever. What a stupid waste of time that was. Rather than attaching and becoming entangled in the world, I could have just been sitting down letting go of more and more defilements, and finding the real Dhamma'.

People in the world say everything is Dhamma, even sexual intercourse and soccer. That's stupid! The only Dhamma is that which is conducive to Enlightenment; that is, the Buddha's teaching which leads to *nibbidā*, *virāga*, and *Nirodha*. What leads to that? Those of you who know your *suttas*, know that what precedes *nibbidā* is seeing things as they truly are. And seeing things as they truly are is preceded by *samādhi*. So don't forget the practise of *samādhi*. It's such a delicate plant and it needs so much nurturing, so much protection until it's strong. If it's not strong yet you can't really afford to be careless. Look after *samādhi*. Of all of the things I've talked about it's much better to look after your *samādhi* than to look after your wisdom.

I say that because it is much easier to know whether you've got *samādhi* or not. As for wisdom, everyone thinks they're wise, everyone thinks they know. That's why there is so much delusion in the world. Many people write books on Buddhism and only a fraction really know what they are talking about, but all the others think they know, think they are wise. Are you one of those who think they know? Be careful because it is so hard to know what real wisdom is. At least with *samādhi* you know whether you've got a peaceful mind or not: you know whether you can sit still in bliss or whether you're distracted all the time and can't sit still for more than half an hour. That's easy to know! *Samādhi*, the stillness of the mind, is a sign of real wisdom, not intellectual wisdom but real wisdom.

Let Go

Wisdom is the understanding of how to let go, the understanding of *anattā* or non-self and of *dukkha*, which means that you don't play around with the fire of the five senses. Wisdom is knowing *anicca*, impermanence. Wisdom is knowing that all things that arise – including all of nature – will cease. Let it cease now, let it go, understand that wisdom. If you really understand that wisdom it means that you can let go. You can just sit down and let go of the body, let go of all the thoughts, let go of the *āsavas*, the out-flowings of the mind. Let go of this mind that seeks its happiness outside. You can let go of the *āsavas*, which take you outside of yourself into the past and the future, into the five sense world, to this, that and the other. Go in the opposite direction don't indulge.

If you go in the opposite direction you will get all the beautiful happiness. You will get the inspiration, the knowledge that the Buddha was an *Arahant*, and that's a difficult thing to know. You may think you know it, but you only know that when Stream Winning happens. What actually is a Buddha? What is an *Arahant* ? Why is the Dhamma *svākkhāto* and what is the *Ariya* Saṅgha ? You've got these beautiful things just waiting for you: an amazing banquet of insights, releases, freedoms, *jhānas*, *magga* and *phala*, path and the fruit – a beautiful banquet with delicious food. But we keep on eating dog pooh instead. So what are you doing that for? Surely you've got enough nous, wisdom, and understanding to know what Enlightenment is. If you are really ready to let go enough and abandon you don't need to just follow what I'm saying. You have read all of this stuff in the *suttas* and this is what all the Kruba Ajahns say.

So why don't you do it? Don't wait for tomorrow; don't wait until you get to your next monastery in a few weeks time. Those of you who are going tomorrow, you might not make it until tomorrow: *anicca maraṇa sati,* mindfulness of impermanence and death – do it now. Those of you leaving on the weekend, get Enlightened before you go, don't wait. Otherwise you'll die and you'll wonder why you wasted so much time. It's probably what happened to you in your last lifetime. Why waste so much time now and in the lifetime before and the one before that? It's just wasted time. So please don't allow these defilements to run riot over you. For your own happiness resist them. Dry out and have the beautiful flames of *jhāna* coming into the mind, rather than the restlessness and distraction of the *kilesas*. Be an inspiration to the world. There are so many stupid people out there teaching Dhamma – we need more *Ariyas*. These beautiful teachings of the Buddha are real, but there are not enough people who have *realised* them to be able to present them to others. If there are not more *Ariyas* in this world, this beautiful Dhamma is going to die out eventually and it's going to be a place for all sorts of strange and weird things. Think of others if not yourself. Practise diligently, and don't waste time. You all know what to do, just go ahead and do it.

15 THE LAW OF CONDITIONALITY

3rd January 2001

Imasmiṃ sati, idaṃ hoti

Imass' uppāda, idaṃ uppajjati

Imasmiṃ asati, idaṃ na hoti

Imassa nirodha, idaṃ nirujjhati

When this is, that is.

With the arising of this, that arises.

When this is not, that is not.

With the ceasing of this, that ceases.

One of the monks asked me to talk about Dependent Origination. Rather than talk about that I want to pay more attention to the Law of Conditionality, which is mentioned in the *gāthā* that I just chanted at the beginning of this talk: 'When this is, that is; and from the arising of this, that arises; when this isn't, then that isn't; and from the cessation of this, that ceases.' What the Buddha is talking about in this beautiful teaching is that everything that arises has its causes and conditions. Part of the Dhamma is actually to see the causes and conditions which give rise to the various qualities and seeing that when those causes and conditions are not there, those qualities cease. So it gives us an idea of the causality of the whole of *saṃsāra*. It gives us an understanding of the nature of this whole process towards Enlightenment. It gives us an understanding of the process that we call the *citta*, the mind.

The Emperor's Clothes

One of the reasons people find it so hard to see deeply into, and accept fully, the teaching of *anattā* (non-self) is because most people who look inside themselves will say that, from their experience of the world, *there is* something there. When we start

to talk about what is deeply within us, we never say that there's nothing there. There is that mysterious – but not mystical – misty, uncertain something, which people take to be a 'me'. However, when we see that fully it reveals itself as a process. This is why Theravada Buddhism and the Buddhism of accomplished meditators disagree with people who say it's just empty and that there is nothing there. There is something there. There is this process that you can feel as being something. Our real problem is that we take it to be something it isn't. That which is there is just a process and that process is beautifully described by the Buddha: with the arising of this, that arises; and from the cessation of this, that ceases.

By understanding this whole process you realise the root cause of *saṃsāra*: the illusion of this 'being', this 'self', this 'me'. As meditators we look deeply into the nature of our minds, but the only way we can really see that nature is to clear away all the undergrowth. A simile that I like is the simile of the Emperor clothed from head to foot in five different garments. He has a hat on top of his head, a scarf around his face, and a jacket over the top half of his body; he has trousers on the bottom half and is wearing high boots. So his whole body is covered up with these five garments, the hat, the scarf, the jacket, the trousers, and the boots. Because he is covered up in this way you can't actually see what or who the Emperor truly is. You don't know what's actually underneath all those clothes or who it is that's walking along. You don't know who is speaking from behind the mask or who is feeling all these things and responding to them. In that simile the five garments covering the Emperor are the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

We often take those five senses to be me, to be the 'self', and that's why we think that they are so important to us. We are very concerned with what we see and don't see. We are very concerned with what we hear and don't hear. We like to hear praise, we don't like to hear blame. We like to hear beautiful sounds and, if we don't like crows, we don't like to hear the crows. Some people like to hear the cement mixer working, some people don't. It is the same with smells. You all know that one of the smells that I delight in is the smell of bat pooh. The reason for that is because I lived for three months having lovely meditations in a cave populated by bats and so I always

relate that sort of smell to a very happy time in my life. We take these preferences to be very important; we take them to be me, to be mine. It's the same with the taste the food. You like this food, you don't like that drink. You like this amount of honey or sugar or coffee-mate or whatever in your tea. We are very concerned with how we feel in our physical body: the aches, the pains, and the pleasures. For many people this is the clothing around the whole of existence; it is all they know of existence. They are concerned with nothing else but the five senses, and they never really know who the Emperor is behind these five senses. So the only way to find out what this Emperor is – by the Emperor I mean *that which you take to be the 'self'*, the mind, consciousness, the will, or whatever – is to undress this Emperor somehow.

That was the great discovery of the Buddha before he sat under the Bodhi tree. Just before he was about to become Enlightened, he remembered the time when he was a small boy sitting under a Rose Apple tree, when he unwittingly entered into a *jhāna* for the first time. He recalled the experience and thought that maybe this is the path to Enlightenment. Insight then arose and he knew that was the path to Enlightenment. He asked himself, 'Why was I afraid of that pleasure which is apart from the five senses?' and he thought, 'I will not be afraid of that pleasure'. He realised that was the path and he sat under the Bodhi tree and developed the *jhānas*.

The *jhānas* are nothing more than the result of letting go of the body and the five senses. The body and the five senses twirl around each other; they are conditioned by each other. When this body dies the five senses cease. When the five senses cease this body dies. They are completely dependent on one another like two sticks holding each other up. When these five senses actually disappear through the practice of meditation then that reveals the nature of the *citta*. It's like taking the clothes off the Emperor and finding out who is underneath. Who is saying all these words? Who is deciding to think this way? Who is deciding to do this? Who gets angry and who gets happy? What is all of this? You need to be able to investigate like this in order to be able to find out what's inside. Of course you then come up with what we call the *citta*, the mind. That's why the first experience – before you even get to a *jhāna* – is seeing a beautiful *nimmitta*, a beautiful light, radiant, wonderful, and very still.

You understand why the Buddha said this mind is radiant (*pabhassara*) when it is not defiled from outside. Remove the clothing from the Emperor and the mind appears brilliant and beautiful.

This is a very beautiful, very enjoyable, fun way of becoming Enlightened. But the main purpose is to get to know what it is that's underneath all of those clothes, and of course the actual Emperor looks very different from the clothes. This is the reason people who have deep experiences of meditation have such a difficult time trying to explain it to other people. It's important to have access to a monk or a teacher who has experienced these states, because they have a much better chance of understanding your particular descriptions and whether your experiences fit in with all the *jhānas*. If a person has been to Paris many, many times, then they are more likely to understand the first time visitor's description of Paris. This is all it really is.

The Builder

The realm of the *citta*, the realm of the mind, is a different world. It's amazing how few people ever get to such a place, or ever realize what such a place is like. That is because they don't have enough data to start the process of Enlightenment. When you start to experience the *citta* alone and see this whole process, it's like seeing the Emperor with all his clothes off. You see what this person really is and then you've got a chance of overcoming the illusion of self. You are actually looking at the process that you take to be you. You see the process of the will, and the 'doer' is seen for what it is. In the *jhānas* all that stops for awhile, and there is the sense of being frozen, not being able to do anything. That gives you a very powerful insight – an insight not based on inference but based on the experience – that there is pure mindfulness, a great awareness, but you are not doing anything, you can't do anything. That is when you start to see that the will is just a process. Before that you thought the will was you. If it really was you it couldn't stop. If it was you and it did stop, then you would die: the self would just disintegrate, and the soul would be abolished.

When you start to see the will ceasing and experience that state for a long period of time, it's seen as a condition, a process. You then see that which does: the chooser, the decider, the generator of thoughts, the will, what the Buddha once described as the builder. This is what Dependent Origination is all about, *imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*, 'when this is, then that occurs'. Once you see that will is not coming from you, you look back and start to see the whole process of causality. *You* are not choosing to do these things. Why did I decide to talk like this, this evening? Why do I decide to scratch my ear? You start to see after a while that this is not coming from a person inside, it is not coming from a self. It is completely conditioned.

Once you start to understand what we call choice, the movement of the mind, you see it is conditioned, fully conditioned, one hundred percent conditioned, and then you can start investigating the conditions. You question what is the condition that makes you do this, what condition makes you do that? And then you find the best conditioning. Because, wherever you are in the world, there will always be some conditioning or brainwashing going on. The best conditioning if you really want to be happy and become Enlightened is to hang out in monasteries. If you come here every Wednesday evening, then you get brainwashed by me, and that's much better than being brainwashed by the T.V. or being brainwashed by the shopping malls. Why is it that when you go to the shopping mall you buy all those things? You are being brainwashed – the conditioning is not coming from you, it's coming from outside.

Once you begin to experience this you start to understand how this mind and body work, and then you can start playing around as it were with the conditioning. When you start playing around with conditioning you realize that if you want to be peaceful you have to create the conditions for peacefulness. You can't just say, 'Now I am going to be peaceful' or, 'now I am going to be happy'. You have to know the conditions for happiness, the conditions for peace, the conditions for *jhāna*, and you the conditions for liberation. This is what Dependent Origination is all about. Once you begin to notice what the conditions for happiness are you know that you can get the grosser happiness's in the world from making good *kamma*. By doing good things

you get happiness, and that should not be belittled by monks who are practising for the higher happiness's of *jhānas* and insight.

Even the lower happiness's are a very important support for the path: that's why monks should keep *sīla* and make merit. I was very pleased once to come across a passage in one of the *suttas* where the Buddha said, 'Monks you too should make merit, should make *paññā*'. When I first read that I thought deep down, 'I've always thought that'. But sometimes you hear monks say, 'No that's just merit, that's for lay people and not necessary for monks. Lay people should build all the toilets, sweep the monastery, feed us and wash up afterwards because we have more important things to do'. But by helping to build a monastery, going out to give talks, helping people, you are helping the *sāsana*, and it's important to make that merit. If you make merit properly, with compassion, with love – rather than just doing it because you have to – if you do whatever service is asked of you in this monastery willingly, and even more than you're asked for the sake of merit, then you will get very happy. And that happiness will be a cause of tranquillity; the tranquillity will be the cause of *samādhi*, and *samādhi* will be the cause of insight and the cause leading to Liberation. It is just the usual conditioned process of things. The Buddha knew that. The great *Ariyas* knew that and the Kruba Ajahns in Thailand know that. All the great teachers know that. That's why they encourage monks to make merit, even though it may be tiring, because it's a really worthwhile thing to do. If you know how to do it properly and you do it willingly without begrudging it, it enhances your meditation, and you know it's the cause for having worldly happiness and good health.

You begin to realize that the cause for this underlying happiness is keeping the precepts. You see that keeping the precepts actually causes a very powerful long lasting happiness. You also see that if you break the precepts you are just creating suffering for yourself. It is cause and effect that's all. Even something like alcohol just creates suffering for you. When you see the cause and affect you really see that there is no way you can keep on doing those stupid things, it doesn't make any sense at all. Take lying or getting angry at other people: what does anger actually do for you? Does it help you get your own back on the other person? Anger just burns you

up. You see that anger is not the cause for happiness; anger just takes you into the hell realms.

I'm sure everyone from time to time has had anger come up. When you're angry you feel very justified that your anger is really worthwhile and right, because the other person has really done something they shouldn't have done. *If ever you get angry it's never the other person's fault. It's your fault.* There is no reason to get angry ever. For the wise person, the liberated person, no matter what other people do to them, whether they are right or wrong, it's no reason to get angry. Anger just causes suffering for you. So knowing that anger causes suffering and knowing how cause and effect works, stops all that silly stuff from coming up. Of course, this is just keeping precepts, keeping virtue, keeping restraint. But then you realize that you can go deeper and you start to let go of concern for the world: the world of the past and future, your plans and your memories, the doing and the thinking, philosophising, and the arguing – you let go of all of that. You let go of all your concepts of Dhamma and *Nibbāna*. By getting into silence you start to see things and that gives you a deeper sense of happiness.

Focusing on that and getting the insight of that happiness you start to realize why meditation is so important and what type of meditation is important. You start to see that all the planning and the lingering on the past, all of the conceptions and thinking about of the past, are just suffering. It causes suffering, it doesn't cause Liberation. All the thinking in the world is not a cause for the liberation the mind or liberation from *saṃsāra*. It just keeps you tied to the wheel and that should be an easy cause and effect to see. If you truly see it, it will become very easy to meditate. You realize that when there is thinking, there are headaches, suffering, problems, things to do, and business in your world.

A Maestro of Silence

When that thinking stops, *imasmiṃ asati idaṃ hoti*, in its place comes the silence, the beautiful silence. Then you begin to let go of the body, the five senses, by focusing

on just one sense, the physical sense of the breath. Allow that to be the only thing you are paying attention to – not listening, not smelling, not tasting, not hearing – just feeling the breath and nothing else. Then allow that to disappear and with it the five senses. Letting go of the breath you realize that these five senses are the cause of misery, because when they go you are happy. The bliss you get when the five senses disappear is much greater than anything you can get through the senses. Even in the heaven realms, where the five sense pleasures reach their limit, they are still much lower than the happiness and bliss of the *jhāna* realms.

So this teaching – if you can experience these things – shows us the cause of suffering. Worldly suffering is just these five senses. I don't know why people want to protect the five senses. I know that a couple of the monks are going to see the optician tomorrow; maybe if they became blind, that would be one less sense to worry about. My nose is sensitive to pollen and I get hay fever, but it's not sensitive to smells. I remember telling Ajahn Jagaro how happy I was, because if a lady wears perfume or if she smells of sweat, it all smells much the same to me because of my nose. That's one sense base I don't have to worry about. Isn't that wonderful?

It's wonderful when the senses disappear. You get a feeling of freedom. It's as if the mind is freed from the burden of the five senses, from the irritation of the five senses, always having to be looking and seeing. When you look at your room, you have to go and tidy it up or dust it or something because it's never tidy, at least not for very long. When you see things in the monastery, you see everything that needs doing, all the bricks that need moving, all the work that is required. When you start listening to what people say, you sometimes get angry, because what they say is not what they should be saying. It's not correct. They haven't got it right. These five senses create so many problems in the world that it's surprising people celebrate them. They have great big parties and fireworks displays because they are celebrating the sight and the sound of bangs. Or take the great orchestras: the poor men and women in those orchestras, in those fancy clothes, have to practice and practise to be able to play music like that. What suffering! They think they are getting somewhere in life.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be a maestro of silence, to be able to let go of all of that and have the bliss, which is greater than any symphony?

This is where one starts to see the cause of a huge amount of worldly suffering: just these five senses. With the arising of that type of knowledge you begin to see with insight, based on the experience of the five senses. You also experience what it's like when the five senses are not there. You compare the two and it's just as plain as the nose on Pinocchio's face that the five senses are so much suffering, and the bliss when the five senses are not there is so much greater.

These are experiential insights that you cannot dismiss. With the insights that you get through thinking and through inference, you can sometimes have the wrong insight because you haven't got the full information. Many people get lost in that way. But the experiential insights that arise can't be put aside. That's why anyone who has these deep experiences, even early in their life, just can't forget them. They are the most important things in your life. Eventually, sooner or later, they'll lead you into brown robes and keep you there. These experiences are showing you that there is something else that is important in life.

Letting Go

The Buddha said that delusion, *avijjā* or ignorance, the first factor of Dependent Origination, is the root cause of the whole of *saṃsāra*. When the Buddha taught Dependent Origination he was talking about how *saṃsāra* works and how this whole process of mind goes from life to life. When the mind gets involved with the body there is the illusion that these five senses are important, and that fun and enjoyment are to be found there.

Lack of insight into the five senses and the five *khandhas* is suffering, and because of that the *saṅkhāras* will go on planning and doing, through body, speech, and mind. That planning and doing, through body, speech and mind is all coming from the illusion of the 'doer', the 'house builder', the 'maker'. And that's all coming from the

illusion that there is something to make, something useful to do, or something that has to be done. When you stop all the doing, then you really have fun. When you stop doing things and let go, that's when you experience these *jhāna* states.

The jhānas are no more than stages of letting go. The more you let go and the more that disappears, the closer you get to *jhānas*. If you let go a lot, these things just happen all by themselves. *The jhānas are conditioned by letting go*. That's a very powerful teaching. When you're meditating always remember the Third Noble Truth. It shows you how to let go. It gives you the underlying theme of *cāga* (giving or letting go); this doesn't belong to you, give it up. The five senses don't belong to you. They are not you and they have nothing to do with you. *Cāga* and *mutti*: you can throw the sense away and free yourself from them. *Anālaya*, not allowing these five senses to stick anywhere, and lastly *paṭinissagga*, renouncing them, saying, "No way five senses, I'm not interested". If you can really do that it's called 'letting go'. You renounce sounds, 'I'm not interested in hearing'; just shut yourself off from sounds. 'I'm not interested in feeling; I'm not interested in this body' – just cut off this body; it doesn't belong to you and it's not yours. "I'm not even going to scratch it because if I start getting involved in this body then I'm stuck; consciousness becomes stuck to this body. I'm going to free myself". Once you remember that in your meditation, you're letting go of the doer, the controller, the *saṅkhāras*.

You can only really let go if you've got a bit of wisdom, understanding, and insight. You need enough insight to have the courage and the faith to let go completely. Many meditators get close to these *jhānas* but they can't let go of that last bit of ego. They want to control, to do, to be in charge of deep meditations, rather than just letting go, sitting back, and enjoying the journey. Give control over to the process. The *saṅkhāras* are the same as this whole craving of *taṇhā* (thirst), *upādāna* (taking up), and *bhava* (existence). In the latter part of the Dependent Origination it's a different way of saying the same thing, because the making of *kamma* is all based on craving, which is the fuel for more existence and birth. All this doing, all this reacting, all this making, all this wanting and not wanting is what causes rebirth. It provides the fuel for *saṃsāra*, the fuel for more existence.

Once you can see this whole cause and effect relationship you know why rebirth happens and why consciousness passes from one life to the next life. You see the causal relationship that is there. One important technical point with causality – *imasmiṃ asati, idaṃ hoti*, 'this being, that comes to be' – is to know that in the Pāli it does not mean that these things have to happen at the same moment, or that when one thing exists the other thing has to be right there at the same time. It doesn't mean the causes or the conditions follow each other from moment to moment. Sometimes causes take a long time to generate their effects, in the same way that *kamma* and its results are often far apart. The *kamma* of today sometimes doesn't give its results until next week, next month, next lifetime, or some other lifetime. That's still just conditionality, the law of *kamma*.

Once one understands that, one can see how one is creating conditions now for both this life and the next life. You understand how you are making your rebirth and how are you are making *saṃsāra*. You understand how birth happens and how one gets a particular role as soon as there is that birth. With birth come the five senses, and the sense bases, and *vedanā* (feeling), and all the factors that follow after *viññāṇa* (consciousness) and *nāma rūpa* (mind and body), to old age, sickness, and death. Because, when there are those things, there are always going to be the experiences and the sensations of old age, sickness and death, and the suffering of all that. This is all Dependent Origination really is. It shows you the cause of rebirth and how rebirth is ended.

It's Already Too Late

Dependent Cessation is the opposite of Dependent Origination. *Avijjā* (ignorance) is finished with when you actually see the nature of this mind and see that there is no 'doer'. It's just a process; you see all the causes and the reasons why you do these things. You even see that 'that which knows' is just a process; consciousness is also just a process. There is not a being in here who hears all this, there is not a person inside who has all these thoughts. Consciousness comes and goes, rises and falls. Sometimes it is one consciousness, sometimes it's another consciousness. Know the

difference between the six consciousnesses. They are all very separate, very different – if you know the differences it is much easier to see consciousness arising and then falling away and another one arising afterwards. It's important to split up these consciousnesses and to know the difference between them. It is especially important to know mind-consciousness in its receptive mode. Once you can see all of this you realize there is no entity in here experiencing all these things. So, why do you want to experience? People just want to be; it is *bhava-taṇhā*, the craving to exist. Instead of saying *bhava-taṇhā*, the craving to exist, perhaps it is better to say the craving to experience. We all want to experience more and more in the world, we want to go to different places and see different thing. We are just craving to experience. When will you be finished with all this experiencing? There is no end to experiencing different things, different sensations, but that's all it is: *sukha vedanā*, *dukkha vedanā* or the *vedanā* in between – that is agreeable feeling, disagreeable feeling, or indifferent or neutral feeling – or each of the six senses.

There are just eighteen different types of *vedanā* (feeling) and that's all you can have. They're just packaged in different wrapping but really there are only eighteen. If you've experienced each one of those different *vedanās* then you've experienced the whole of *saṃsāra*. So, after a while you say, "Been there, done that". You go up the Amazon and this is just another *cakkhu viññāṇa*, eye sensation. If you like it, it is *sukha*, if you don't like it, it is *dukkha*. Here we go again. There are only eighteen things to experience in this world. So: been there, done that! Have an end to it. When one sees in this way, it's the cause for cessation.

The Buddha talked about Dependent Cessation starting with *avijjā* (ignorance) being abandoned, and actually having insight into the Four Noble Truths that the body and mind, all experience, all the senses, are suffering. Once you start to see that fully then *Nibbidā* comes up: you're just not interested in this sensory experience any more. Once *Nibbidā* comes up it doesn't matter. There is no person inside who refuses to do this or do that. It's just a natural process, and whether you like it or not, it happens. That's why I keep saying that once people hear and understand these teachings it's already too late; you're already on the bus, You are going to become Enlightened

whether you like it or not. So you might as well stop wriggling and screaming and just all become monks or nuns. Get it over and done with as quickly as possible. Forget about your world. Forget about your jobs and money. Forget about your travel plans. Forget about all that and just let it all go. It's going to happen anyway, whether you come kicking or screaming or whether you come gently. Realizing that whole process which leads to Enlightenment, you realize there is no one in there to hasten it along or to slow it down. Once *avijjā* is overcome it's just causes and effects working their way out. The knowledge of non-self is there. These are the Four Noble Truths. The process that ends *saṃsāra* is inevitable, it has begun, and it cannot be stopped. You see the complete empty nature of the mind. You see that the body is empty of a self, empty of a core. It is just an empty process. There is no real happiness or joy in that process. Happiness and joy is found in ending things. Seeing that, whether you like it or not, your world becomes reconditioned.

By ending things you become an *Ariya*. An *Ariya* is one who seeks endings, who just wants to stop. It's not the person who wants to stop, it's just the experience. Insight is what makes things stop. There is no interest any more, and so there is nothing to keep *saṃsāra* going. One has seen through the whole process of body and mind, one has seen through the senses playing around. You see that there is not one of the eighteen different types of feelings that is worth anything; so finish with it. *Saṃsāra* starts to unravel because *avijjā* has been overcome and you don't make any more *saṅkhāras*. The cause for future rebirth, the craving and the delight in rebirth, has been stopped.

Kāma-taṇhā, the craving to enjoy the five senses, wants to find happiness in having a nice meal, in sex, in going to see a nice movie, and in going here or there. What a stupid idea! Once you've seen the Dhamma you see that is complete idiocy. Hearing nice music is not going to satisfy you, it's just irritating. There is no sound as beautiful as silence. Trying to find pleasure in the body? Each one of you has meditated long enough now to know that the best pleasure in the body is when the body disappears and you get into a deep meditation. That's the only time the body's not hot or cold, hasn't got an ache or a fever, and hasn't got a headache or a gut ache

or whatever other ache you have. The only time there is any real comfort is when the body disappears, when the sense of touch is completely turned off. I don't know why people want to play around in that world of *kāma-taṇhā*, craving for sensuality in the five senses, or *bhava-taṇhā*, the craving to exist. What do you want to exist for? Why do you want to be? Why do you want to experience again? It's complete stupidity once it's actually seen. When those things disappear, there are no *saṅkhāras* made, there is no craving, there is no attachment, you're not making existence, *bhava*. So when you see that the causes of rebirth are uprooted and there is nothing there that is going to give rise to any rebirth, that's when one knows what Enlightenment, what *Arahatta*, is. There are no causes and nothing is making rebirth. The natural process has worked its way out, it has worked its way through the last of the lingering delusions about craving. Any possibility of happiness in the sense world is gone, and you're someone who just likes ending things, simplifying things, because the world outside has no meaning for you. The only thing that has meaning for you is spreading the Dhamma and helping other people out of compassion while you've still got the energy. When they die it's not really the *Ariya* or *Arahant* who dies, because there was no one there to die, it's just a process that ends. That's why you never say that *Arahants* die, they *Parinibbāna*. *Parinibbāna* means this whole process finally comes to a grinding halt and everything just dissipates and disappears, never to arise again. That's the ending of the whole cycle of *saṃsāra*. Seeing in that way and understanding the Buddha's full teaching becomes very beautiful.

At this point it becomes clear that putting off one's Enlightenment to become a Bodhisattva makes no sense. If you can see the Dhamma, the whole idea is to get out and help as many people as you can by teaching the Dhamma. After your Enlightenment you are an example to people of the happiness that arises from letting go of the sensory world. You are a beacon to people so that they too can find their way out of this jungle of excitements, sensory pleasures, anger and delight, disappointments, frustrations, and all that sort of stuff. Good monks and good nuns, who are *Ariyans*, can lead a lot of people out of *saṃsāra*, because they are already on the way out themselves. If they don't know the way out themselves, how can they lead other people out of the blazing house of *saṃsāra*? This is a process that is beyond stopping. You cannot put off Enlightenment once you've seen the Dhamma

anymore than you can break the laws of gravity or the natural laws. There is a natural law that once one is a Stream Winner one has to end *saṃsāra* sooner or later. One cannot stop it because there is no one in here to stop it. It's all running according to the natural law of cause and effect. From the cessation of this, that ceases, *imassa nirodha – etaṃ nirujjhati*: from the cessation of the stupidity of thinking that there is someone inside, that you are the owner of things, a possessor of experiences, of will, and of knowing – *saṃsāra* soon ceases.

It does not happen automatically the next moment, sometimes it takes seven years or seven lifetimes. But at least you know *idaṃ nirujjhati*, that these five *khandhas*, the whole of *nāma rūpa*, this whole world that you know – that you think is something real but which is just an empty process – will cease and end. Isn't it wonderful that it can end? The Buddha kept on saying, "*Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ*", *Nibbāna* is the ultimate happiness. If you don't believe that then just end things slightly, give things away, let go of things, and you will see that the more you let go the more happiness you get. End a lot and you get a lot of happiness; end completely and you get the ultimate happiness, the complete happiness of *Nibbāna*. So this is just the cause and effect nature of the mind, the cause and effect nature of the world. There is no God running all of this, there is no self inside you planning all of this, it's just a process.

You're fortunate to be brainwashed by this talk on the Law of Conditionality.

16 BREAKING THE BARRIER

The Five Hindrances

15th of August 2001

The Buddha talked about the triple practice, of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, virtue, concentration, and wisdom. In this monastery, especially at this time of the year, the community is keeping a very sufficient practise of *sīla*. Your restraint and the keeping of the precepts are admirable. One usually doesn't need to talk too much about that.

Solitude is one of the best ways of encouraging the maintenance of the precepts. The more often people meet, talk, and associate together, the more opportunity there is for breaking the precepts. Meeting other people allows the defilements of the mind to arise, and that is the cause of precepts being broken. In solitude the precepts are less likely to be broken. The stimulation of living amongst other people, of being in their company, is reduced. Therefore you are less likely to err.

So this is a time of solitude. It is a time for monks to be alone and not engage in conversations. It is a time for not doing so much. It is a time of great purity for your precepts. During the first half of the retreat I have focused on using whatever tools, skilful means, and tricks I have learnt in my lifetime as a meditator, to instruct, encourage, and inspire you on the path to the development of deeper and deeper *samādhi*. The purpose of *samādhi* is to overcome the five hindrances and provide the data for 'insight' to work with. That data, and that insight, will come later on in this retreat.

Liberating the Mind

People often rush ahead of themselves. They start thinking and forming views about reality before they have any experience of such things as the *jhānas*, the deep meditation states of 'letting go'. Such speculation is merely *papañca*, the proliferation of the mind, its ideas, fantasies, and dreams. I usually like to leave that subject until much later in the retreat.

Having the deliberate idea of overcoming these five hindrances is very important. It

is the barrier of the five hindrances that blocks the door to both the *jhānas* and wisdom. It is the five hindrances that fuel *avijjā,* ignorance. The Buddha said that they are the nutriments, the food, of delusion. If the five hindrances are present in the mind, we cannot trust our ideas or views.

Everybody thinks they are right; that's a self-evident truth. There is not one person in this room who would say they have wrong view. We almost always think we are right. However, if we think we are wrong, then in that sense we are right. This is because we have finally seen that we were wrong.

It is fascinating to contemplate that. In the early years of my monastic life I wondered, 'why is it that good monks argue, and that people in this world have differences of opinion?' If we investigate we can see the reason why. It is because of the work of the five hindrances: they bend perception, bend reality, bend thought, and bend views to suit their purposes. Psychology calls that 'denial'. We see what we want to see. We perceive what we think is there. That's why there are so many people in this world who are so committed, absolutely sure, absolutely certain, that they are on the right path. Some people, who are committed absolutely, even believe that they are Stream-winners, Non-Returners, or *Arahants*. They can't see the truth because of the power of the hindrances.

So it is important to know and overcome these hindrances. There is an acid test to know whether or not those hindrances are overcome. That test is the ability to enter into *jhānas*. The hindrances are the very things that block *jhānas*. Using the metaphor of entering a building or a house, if the door is wide open, there is nothing stopping or baring a person from entering. If the hindrances are absent, really absent, there is nothing to stop a person from entering into the states of absorption. The reason these things are called hindrances is because they stop one from entering the *jhānas*. They fuel *avijjā* or delusion. The hindrances hinder not only wisdom; they also block the passage into *jhānas*.

Using these criteria tells us whether we are ready to develop the enlightening wisdom yet, whether we are ready to actually look into the nature of things, like the mind, the

body, and the other *khandhas*. This shows us not only whether we are ready to do these things, but also what these hindrances really are and how subtle they can be.

People sometimes think that they have overcome the hindrances. But they have not, because they are still too far away from being able to enter into a *jhāna*. Entering the *jhānas* is the acid test. That is why I can't see any reason for a person to stop at the entrance into a *jhāna* and say, "This is good enough! Now I can contemplate. Now I will be able to find out". The usual practice, the common practice, is to suppress the hindrances and then having as it were, the door of *jhāna* wide open to us. The *jhāna* just happens: the *jhāna* sucks us in or I should say sucks the mind in, sucks awareness in. It shows us states where the hindrances are overcome. It's a moot point whether we could stop at the gate into *jhānas* anyway.

I've mentioned on many occasions that there comes a time in the practise of *samādhi* when a snowball effect happens. We can neither stop the process, nor can we accelerate it. We become just an observer. With this wonderful focussing of the mind and abandoning of the world, that effect gets stronger. It gets stronger in the same way as a snowball that is rolling down a hill gets larger and larger. We might be able to stop the snowball somewhere near the top of the hill. But when the snowball gets right down to the valley, it's so big and it's so fast that I can't see how it can be stopped. We call that state *upacāra samādhi* (neighbourhood *samādhi*). It is the outside edges of the *jhānas* were there are no hindrances. I cannot see how the mind can stop and linger with *upacāra samādhi*. The process will pull the mind through into the *jhāna*. The *jhāna* is a state without hindrances, which can be clearly seen when one emerges from the *jhāna*. Those hindrances stay knocked out for a long time. If a *jhāna* has not been achieved, the five hindrances, together with discontent and weariness, of the body and mind invade the mind and remain.

When a *jhāna* has been achieved these things can't invade the mind. They can't remain, and there is freedom from the hindrances. This has classically been seen as the precursor to the arising of deep insight. Insight gives rise to the powers and the fruits of the practice. It happens because the five hindrances are overcome, and the mind can look back over those experiences, the *jhānas*. Standing on those

experiences, resting on them, based on them you have the data to actually see into the nature of the mind and the body – the nature of the five *khandhas*, and the nature of the sense bases. Without that data it's very hard to imagine how anyone would be able see the truth.

So overcome those five hindrances and use that state of the *jhānas* as the place where one focuses one's investigation in order to discover why, where and how those states came about and what they mean. Suppressing the five hindrances is the key to this whole practice that we call the liberation of the mind. You've heard about these five hindrances often before, but they can always be restated and explained at deeper and deeper levels. Remember, these five hindrances are not just ordinary sensory desire, ill-will, restlessness and remorse, sloth and torpor, and doubt.

Sometimes we look at our minds and think: 'I've got no sensory desire. I don't really want anything. I've got no lust or greed. I'm not looking for a cup of tea or food, for women, or whatever. I've got no ill-will towards anybody, towards myself, or to anything. I haven't got any real restlessness or sloth and torpor. I've got no real doubts. I know I'm alright'. That happens very often, but it's not sufficient. We can't get into *jhānas* from that state. That's why I tell people that when we're meditating, if there is a blockage, if we can't get further, it must be because of one of the hindrances, one of the *nīvaraṇas*.

Be methodical in the meditation practise, don't waste so much time. Discover which hindrance is blocking progress, identify the problem, and actually find a solution. I've got tremendous faith in the Buddha's teaching. If there were six hindrances or seven hindrances or eight hindrances the Buddha would have said so. The usual list, the five hindrances, is sufficient to describe all the obstacles between the meditator and *jhāna*. So we should look at those and investigate them.

Sensual Desire

Kāmacchanda,the most important hindrance, comes first. *Kāmacchanda* is not just sensory desire. There are times when the English translation of these terms leaves so much to be desired. People who just follow those English translations miss so much.

I learned a lot of Pāli from the Vinaya, the disciplinary and procedural rules for monks, because there these terms are given a very practical meaning. In Pāli, *chanda* is what we have to do if we cannot attend a meeting of the community of monks and we want to give approval and agreement to what's happening there. We give our '*chanda'* to go ahead in our absence. *Chanda* is agreement, approval, consent, and it's much more subtle than mere desire. It means that we are really buying into this, giving in to this, wanting it, approving it. We are allowing it to happen. In the same way that we have *chanda* in the Vinaya, we have *kāmacchanda* in the five hindrances. We give our approval for the sensory world to be in our minds, in our consciousness. We accept it. We approve of it and we play with it. That's all *chanda*. We're letting sensual desire completely occupy the mind. That's much more subtle than just mere desire. The *kāma* part means all that is contained in *kāmaloka*, the world of the five senses. The *kāmaloka* realms include the hell realm, the animal realm, the ghost realm, the human realm, and the *deva* realms. *Kāmacchanda* is the acceptance, agreement, and consent for that world to occupy us.

The hindrance of *kāmacchanda* can be anything from the extremes of lust to just being concerned with how the body is doing. The thinking about the letter that we have to write, or the rain pattering on the roof, thinking about our huts or what needs to be built next or were we are going to go next, That is all in the *kāmaloka* world, is all sensual desire. *Kāmacchanda* also includes *kāmavitakka*, or sensuous thoughts about those things. It can be thoughts about family or health, about coming here or going there. Even thoughts about words are included because words are sounds; they're part of the sound base. All these things are part of *kāmaloka*, part of the five-sense world. Approving of those things is what keeps them interfering with your meditation. When we are trying to watch the breath and feelings come up in the body, it's because we're approving of the mind going out to the body. We're consenting to it. We're allowing it to happen.

One of the great antidotes to desire is *nibbidā* or turning away, repulsion or revulsion to that world. The Buddha gave some very meaningful similes for *kāmaloka*, the world of sensory desire. One of my favourite similes is the one about a bone smeared with blood and tossed to a hungry dog. That's so apt for the sensory world. If we pay

attention to the sensory world, we get a taste of comfort just for a moment. We scratch the itch and it feels good for a moment but it doesn't solve the underlying problem. In the same way, when the dog gets a bone smeared with blood, it licks it and it tastes as if it's a full meal, as if it's real meat. Of course, it only gets the taste and then there is no real sustenance. There is no body to it, nothing that gives the fulfilment of its promises.

It is the same with sensory desire. In its grossest form in the world – whether it's sexuality, food, or whatever else you desire – it never gives you satisfaction. Don't be a person who roams the world looking for the next bone smeared with blood. We go here or there and we get a bone smeared with blood, 'Oh that's not the right one'. We go to another monastery and taste that. That's not the right one either. We are always running around looking for the real meat, but we can't find that real meat in the sensory world. The *suttas* say we only reap weariness and disappointment. So all the weariness and disappointment that comes up in our life is because we are trying to go for a blood-smeared bone, not the real, full four-course meal which we get when we give up those things.

Another fascinating simile is the simile of a man climbing a tree to get some fruit. While he is up in the tree getting the fruit another man comes along also wanting fruit and chops the tree down. So even if it is unintentional, when you go for the sensory world, just by its very nature it is going to hurt and bring you pain.

Last night I gave a talk about conflict in the world. Basically there is no end to conflict in the world. That's what the world is about. Trying to resolve conflict in the world is impossible. To limit conflict is possible, but to stop it completely is not. As the saying goes in English, 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear'. *Saṃsāra* is like that, and that's why the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths. The first Noble Truth is suffering or unsatisfactoriness; the idea is to get out of *saṃsāra*, get out of conflict by not getting re-born again. Once we're born we have conflict: we have arguments with people, we have conflict with the weather, we have conflict with the food, or the food has conflict with our stomach. There are all sorts of conflicts going on in the world. I had a stomach ache today, so I know about conflict with food –

that's par for the course.

Understand that the sensory realm is dangerous. Even if people have no intention to hurt, harm, cause you problems, or irritate you, it's just the nature of the sensory world. If we climb up into that tree, sooner or later, someone with no bad intentions towards us is going to cut us down and almost kill us. We sometimes get angry with others or have ill-will towards others because we think that people are doing this on purpose. They don't do these things on purpose. It's just a result of being in the world. There are no bad intentions, it just happens. This is the nature of the sensory world: it's dangerous!

If we play around in the world we are going to get into trouble. Understanding that gives us aversion, *nibbidā*. It gives us aversion and disgust towards that world and for 'gnawing at the bones' which promise you so much but give so little. Aversion to the sensory world is not just towards the physical body. To turn away from the body, to get *nibbidā* towards it, we practise *asubha*. But there's also the aversion towards sound and all the things you hear from other people, the praise and blame – we have *nibbidā* towards both. We have *nibbidā* towards sights, smells, and tastes, towards all this food that we have. It's such a problem!

I remember years ago, a friend of mine said, "Wouldn't it be great if we could get some 'astronaut food'". He had heard that 'astronaut food' was just a few pills. You took one for protein, one for vitamins, and one for carbohydrates. We would just need to take the pills rather than having all these different types of food, which needs to be cooked, prepared, set out and then eaten. It would be great, wouldn't it, if we could just take pills once a day? It would be great! Monks taking bowls to the people who are on retreat wouldn't have so much to carry, just a little medicine bottle, "here's your *dāna* for today". It would be wonderful because it takes away all the problems that go with tastes. That would turn us away from the world of food. We would not be concerned about it. We would just put food in our bowl and eat it. We see things and we leave them alone. We turn away from all of that.

Nibbidā, which is revulsion to that world, is the way of turning off those five senses.

Instead of having *kāmacchanda* we have *kāmanibbidā*. *Kāmanibbidā* turns us away from that world. How long have we lived in that world? What has it ever given us? What we've got from that world are just problems. It gives us all sorts of problems: old age, suffering, and death, again and again and again.

If I've ever given you a problem, don't blame me; its *kāma*, the sensory world, that's given you the problem. If it's our body that is giving problems, it's not sickness, its *kāma*, the sensory world. *Having nibbidā to the sensory world is the antidote to the hindrances*. Not only will it stop us indulging in thoughts about things of the past and in the experience of the senses now, but it will also stop us making plans about them. Why do we actually do any planning? Because we think that we can control that world and gain happiness. That is a hopeless task. The whole thing stinks. Just throw it all away. We needn't worry about of the future, because we know it's going to be bad. The future is not going to give us much happiness. It's just going to be more trouble, with more problems.

Being an abbot I don't control anything. To try just gives me more trouble, more problems. Being the second monk, the third monk, or a junior monk is just more trouble, more problems in the sensory realm. So don't ever plan or think about the future when you're meditating. Have *Nibbidā* towards all of that. We should also develop *Nibbidā* towards food. We only eat because is sustains the body, because it's our duty to keep the body reasonably healthy. Follow the middle way – the Buddha's way!

When we have *Nibbidā* towards the five senses, they are very easy to turn off. This means that when you are meditating, feelings in the body don't come up so easily. We're fed up trying to get this body into a nice position. This insight came to me early on in my monastic life. I didn't know anything about it when I was a lay meditator. As a monk meditator, I was sitting down and my legs went to sleep. I had pins and needles. Every time that happened I would move and destroy my meditation. Finally one day I decided I'd had enough of this. I had *Nibbidā* towards always having to change position because of my legs going to sleep. I decided it doesn't matter if gangrene sets in or whatever. I'll just sit still. To my amazement I had

called the body's bluff, and the blood started flowing again. The pins and needles disappeared by themselves.

At other times, people, have called the bluff of the body. Sitting there with aches and pains, they just forget about it and then get into deep meditation. Afterwards the aches and pains aren't there any more. These aches and pains in the body, are they really aches and pains or are they a product of the mind? When we are in *samādhi* we can sit meditation for hours and there are no aches and pains at all. If we sit there for an hour or an hour and a half without *samādhi*, the body aches and is stiff. What's going on? After a while we lose confidence that the body always tells the truth. We lose confidence that the eyes tell the truth, that the ears tell the truth. We lose confidence that the nose or the tongue tells the truth. We have *Nibbidā* towards all of that. That means that these things no longer interfere with us. A sound comes up and we are not concerned. We turn away from those things. The same thing happens with ill-will, the second hindrance, when it comes up.

Ill-Will and Anger

Ill-will is such a foolish hindrance; it's a crazy hindrance. I don't know why people actually get bothered with ill-will. What does it ever do for you? If someone upsets you, says something you don't like, or does something that you don't approve of, why allow them to give you a bad day? We don't have to allow them to spoil our happiness. Even if we have ill-will towards someone else, what does that actually achieve? It's just looking for revenge: 'They hurt me and therefore I'm going to hurt them'. So we go around planning, making waves, trying to upset them, or put them down. So much of speech, especially in confrontations, is just trying to give another person a bad day. Ill-will doesn't really help anybody. If someone else has done something wrong, if they really have broken their precepts or done something inappropriate, it's their problem, their *kamma's* problem. We don't have to have ill-will towards them. *Kamma will sort everything out*!

When we see ill-will, we see that it's wasting so much time in our life. We haven't much time to practise this path, but right now on a meditation retreat, we've got the best time of all. There are not many distractions for us. So why waste time with the

distraction of ill-will? Outside, when we are not on retreat, we are always *doing things* and there is even less time to meditate. So why waste even a second with ill-will? It's craziness. I think the Buddha described it as a sickness. With that sickness, there is no way you can get any wisdom. There's no way that you can get happiness or any concentration in meditation. So put ill-will aside. Use your insight and your intelligence to see that ill-will gets you nowhere. Just put it aside. Have revulsion towards ill-will. Reflect on just how much time it's wasted for you, how it's tortured you, how it's made you sick and weak, and then allow it to disappear.

Of course, ill-will goes very deep. It's ill-will that stops us having happiness. It doesn't allow us happiness. Ill-will can be very aggressive. There's a story about the anger-eating demon. I'm not going into the details here because you have probably all heard it so many times before. If we give the demon anger or aggression, it gets stronger. To clear some of the defilements we 'slap them around a bit', but if we try that with ill-will it gets even worse. Ill-will comes from a sense of self. So it's ill-will towards ill-will. That's not the way to deal with it. The Buddha said *mettā* or loving-kindness is the way to overcome ill-will. The monks on the River Vaggumuda doing *asubha* meditations got into so much ill-will towards themselves that they committed suicide. The Buddha had to say, "Monks, that's the wrong way. Balance your practise". *Asubha* meditation is great for reducing and suppressing sensory desire, *but ill-will needs loving-kindness*. Ill-will needs the softness of the mind and that has to be looked at in one's meditation.

Often people can't get into deep meditation not because of ill-will towards others but because of ill-will towards themselves or ill-will towards the meditation object. What that means is that when we are meditating, for instance when we are watching the breath, we have ill-will towards the breath. In other words, we're going to 'conquer' the breath. We are going to use our 'macho' power; we think, 'I'm stronger than you'. So we grab hold of the breath, like a bouncer at a night club. We're going to capture the breath and we're going to keep hold of it. That aggression is ill-will. We may be able to hold the breath for a short time, but because of *anicca* (impermanence), as soon as we loosen our grip the breath is going to 'run away'. It will run fast and not come back. The stress of that practice will never allow the mind to settle down.

That's why in meditation it is good from time to time to practise some loving-kindness. I don't mean by doing the 'may all beings be happy' as a verbal exercise, but by remembering what loving-kindness means. Bringing loving kindness up into the mind softens the mind. By directing that mood of loving-kindness onto the breath, we are meditating on the breath with *mettā*. *Mettā* and *ānāpānasati* just come together as one. We are watching the breath so softly, and we find that the breath will just stay there. We are not trying to grab hold of it; we are not holding it down with force. We're not fighting the breath like a soldier; we are being compassionate like a Buddha. With that compassion, that kindness, that softness, we find it's much easier to hold the breath and much easier to develop deep meditation.

One time, at the start of a weekend meditation retreat, I was very tired from all of the work I had done during the week, and from all the effort of getting to the retreat, and from giving the introductory talk. After the talk I thought, 'okay, now is the time that I can do some meditation'. It was marvellous to put *mettā* onto the breath and I had a wonderful deep meditation. I even dreamt of that deep meditation during the night. I got up in the morning and the *nimmitta* was right there as soon as I woke up. It's a marvellous experience to put loving-kindness together with the breath. It was obvious that evening, maybe because of my tiredness, that my hindrance was ill-will. But I spotted it and gave it the antidote of *mettā* with amazing results.

When we can see these hindrances and actually apply the right antidote it's amazing what happens. The only real way we can know if it is ill-will is to try using *mettā*. If it works we know, 'yes, that was ill-will'. After that we know how very subtle the hindrance of ill-will can be. We only know through the practice of *mettā*. I couldn't really see the ill-will I had that evening. I couldn't recognize it as ill-will. I just had the intuition to do loving-kindness meditation and it worked. Sometimes ill-will manifests and you just can't notice it. It's almost invisible. If the meditation immediately goes deeper by the use of loving-kindness, then you know, 'yes, that was ill-will'. Some of these hindrances are so subtle they are like an invisible man or a ghost that blocks the way. They are so refined and so subtle we can't really see them blocking the way. The remedies that the Buddha gave are the ones that work.

Sloth and Torpor

Sloth and torpor are negativity, trying to escape through sleep. I used to visit the prisons. Prisons are very unpleasant places for people to stay in. One of the common phrases one heard was, "an hour of sleep is an hour off your sentence". Here an hour of extra sleep is an hour of wasted opportunity. Sloth and torpor shows us that we are really not enjoying what we are doing. There is no happiness in our practice. *Asubha* practice, the aversion to things, can quite easily lead to sloth and torpor, unless you develop *asubha* meditation to the point where is arouses *pītisukha*. But be careful with that. If it arouses negativity, the mind will be inclined to go into sloth and torpor.

If you enjoy meditating, after a while, energy arises in the mind. Don't always look at the clock. Look at the present moment instead. Clocks can create sloth and torpor. "It's ten o'clock, it's eleven o'clock, it's my bedtime now", and we start to yawn. If we don't look at the clock, who knows what time it is? Once, when I was a lay person, I went to the far north of Norway in the Artic circle. It was light nearly all day and night. In twenty-four hours it never changed much and that really confused me. I didn't know the right time to sleep. It would be marvellous to have all the monks go up there for the Rains Retreat. We would find we would have extra energy. Why sleep when it's light? We would only sleep when the body told us it's really tired, not just because it's dark or because it's our bedtime.

One reason why, in this monastery, we don't have morning and evening meetings, is because I don't want you to be the prisoners of clocks. I want you to be free of that. So when the meditation is going well, just go for it! And then when it's time to rest, just rest. Remember though that sometimes if we push ourselves too much, we just get into sloth and torpor. It's much better if a person has clarity of mind and not so much meditation, than to have hardly any sleep and have a dull mind all day. Be careful with that. I've been through that myself. If we try to cut down on sleep to the point that, when we get up in the morning we just nod off or we fall asleep sitting up, then we're not getting enough sleep. Also, be careful not to have too much sleep, because here again, that leads to sloth and torpor. Get the right amount of sleep, the right amount of food, the right amount of exercise, and the right amount of happiness in your life. Then you won't have too much sloth and torpor. Negative people often

have sloth and torpor while those with a positive attitude have energy.

If you have sloth and torpor, bring up happiness. *Happiness is energy*. Bring up a happy or joyful object into the mind. If you enjoy chanting, chant. If you enjoy walking, walk. If you enjoy sitting, sit. If you enjoy reading, read. I'm not talking about sensory enjoyment, so don't go thinking about women. I won't tell you who it was, but one of the monks in a monastery in Thailand did that and he said he had no sloth and torpor, no restlessness at all. But that's not the way to overcome those hindrances. One hindrance is just being substituted by another one. Bring up a wholesome object that brings happiness and joy.

One of my favourite reflections is on *all the sacrifices, and all the goodness that I have done*. One monk reminded me today of all the wonderful people who came for my birthday. He said that they came because I'd done something for them. I had given them something. That was why they came. It was my *cāga*, my generosity, my giving that caused that. So we can reflect upon that instead of on being negative. Last year I thought, 'why is my birthday during the rains retreat? It's really unfair. Why can't it be some other time when we're busy anyway?' I should have had a more positive attitude and that would have given me energy, but I forgot to do that. So I was negative to my birthday. Next time, I'll reflect, 'isn't it wonderful that so many people come. They give so many wonderful birthday cakes'. That positive energy brings up happiness and joy to overcome sloth and torpor. Anything that gives joy energises the mind.

Restlessness and Remorse

When we get to *uddhaccakukkucca*, the restlessness of the mind, we are all familiar with this one. We are meditating and the mind goes backwards and forwards. We try to make the mind stop thinking and going here and there, but it just won't settle down. Restlessness is very close to ill-will. But if we really look deeper we'll find that the mind has got into fault-finding and lack of contentment. That word 'contentment' is so powerful. If loving-kindness doesn't work then just try developing contentment. They are very close to each other. Contentment says to the anger-eating demon, 'Demon, you can be here as long as you like'. If the mind is running backwards and forwards, allow it to run backwards and forwards. Tell the mind, 'you can run

wherever you want mind, I'm completely content'. That takes away the force that keeps the mind moving. What is that force? It's always discontent: wanting something else, wanting to be somewhere else, and never really wanting what's happening here and now. We have judged what we are doing to be wrong. The mind is wandering all over the place and we think that is not good enough. But by developing contentment, we see that's okay. So just leave it. What arises passes away. The mind will slow down by itself eventually.

Contentment is undermining the 'doer' and that's very difficult to see. When we apply contentment more and more, when we apply it deeper and deeper, we find that it is an incredibly powerful tool for getting into deep *samādhi*. So, when we're watching the breath, we're just content to be with this rough old breath, which we're on now. We're absolutely content. We don't want anything else in the whole world, ever. All we want is just to be here now with this rotten old breath. Try that. *It is called 'letting go'*. Full contentment is like climbing onto the bus and letting everything just happen. The 'doer', the thing creating the problem, has been seen. 'Māra, I know you. You're just discontent and fault finding. I'm not going to follow you. I'm not going to buy into you whatever you want to do. Be off with you.' That tells Māra he's been seen, and he slinks away with shoulders hunched saying, "the monk knows me". That metaphor means that the disturbance 'slinks' away with 'shoulders hunched', and the mind settles because of contentment. There is no reason to make the mind move.

It's like Ajahn Chah's simile of the leaf fluttering in the tree – we've removed the wind. *Contentment has removed the wind of discontent, of doing*. When that wind has been removed, little by little the leaf flutters less and less. The mind settles down and so does the breath and before we know it we're just watching the 'beautiful breath'. We're so content to be with the 'beautiful breath', and that contentment becomes the inclination of the mind. It becomes established in the mind. We are so content that the 'beautiful breath' turns into a *nimmitta*, but we don't care. We're content if the *nimmitta* comes or if the *nimmitta* goes. However long it wants to stay, it can stay. We're so content we're not forcing the issue. We've let go and we're not driving the meditation. Because of that contentment, the *nimmitta* doesn't move.

Because it doesn't move it builds up more and more energy and we get into the first *jhāna*. Contentment still keeps on working to overcome *vitakka vicāra* and then one has the full contentment of the second *jhāna*. That's how far contentment can take you. It's a powerful antidote to restlessness, to that which moves the mind, and that which makes it wobble in the first *jhāna*.

So the antidote to restlessness is just knowing that we are finding-fault and being critical. Monks who are always critical – always finding fault with the monastery, with other people, with this or with that – should know that they will never find contentment in the world. They'll go to another monastery, but they'll take the fault-finding mind with them, and they won't be content there either. Even if they could find the Jeta Grove and the Buddha was sitting there, they would say, "Oh, he's just an Indian!" It's that fault-finding mind, which is the opposite of contentment.

Real contentment has a feel to it. When we practise contentment often in the meditation, it becomes not just a word, it becomes a whole territory in the mind. It's a territory, a place, a path, that leads to deep meditations. It's a very, very beautiful word. The more we reflect upon it, the more we allow it to lead us, the more we will know how powerful it is as a path into the deep meditations. It also shows us the path of an Arahant, because they are absolutely content.

The hindrance of *uddhaccakukkucca*, including remorse and worry, is very close to the hindrance of *vicikicchā*, doubt and uncertainty. We feel remorse about things that we've done, which we shouldn't have done. We all know the way to stop that is with forgiveness. Try to do your best and then just let it go. Everyone makes mistakes in this world. No one is perfect because the world isn't perfect. The body, feelings perception, volitional formations, and consciousness aren't perfect. So what do we expect? Any monk, any kangaroo, is the same. They are not perfect, they are just *khandhas*. So forgive and let go. What's been done is just 'par for the course'.

Doubt

Vicikicchā or doubt is the last hindrance. It is the opposite of sloth and torpor; it is thinking too much. When you think too much you will always have doubts.

Wherever there's thinking, it goes in two ways. It could be this way, or it could be that way. That's duality. When there's no duality, there is a unity of mind and then doubt cannot happen. The antidote to doubt is just to devote ourselves to the instructions. Sometimes doubt can come up when we contemplate the Dhamma rather than the path. We contemplate the goal rather than the way to the goal. The way to the goal is quite clear. Everybody agrees on that, especially in our tradition. But people have differences of opinion on what is actually seen when we get there.

It's a waste of time having those differences of opinion. We have to get there first of all and then see for ourselves. So don't waste time having doubts about the goal and about what's going to be there. You know it's good. The Buddha went there and said that *Nibbāna* was a nice place to be. So follow the path and have confidence that this is the path of the *Ariyas*. It's the path you see in the *suttas*. It's the path that leads to *Nibbāna*. It's a gradual path, which means it gradually gets better and better, more and more powerful, happier and happier, more and more profound. We have the feeling that we are getting closer and closer to something that is very amazing, very wonderful and liberating. We are getting closer and closer to what we've always wanted. The more we meditate, the closer we get and the surer we are that this is the path. *Vicikicchā* is overcome gradually through practising, through the experience of what's happening. When eventually we get our first experience of a *jhāna*, all the doubt about what we need to do is usually abandoned. We actually see what's going on with this mind and body, and all doubt goes. We know what to do. There is no messing around, no wobbling, no faltering, and no hesitation. This is what we've got to do. *So get in there and do it*!

Conclusion

These are the five hindrances to our meditation practice. Whatever is stopping us from enjoying the deepest meditation has to be one of these five hindrances or a combination of them. If it's a combination, one of them will be prominent. So don't mess around: know the obstacle, know the remedy, and apply it. In applying the remedy you will also be practising recollection of or reflection on the Dhamma (*Dhammānussati*). The reason why *Dhammānussati* leads to deep insight is because there are refined forms of craving, refined forms of *upādāna* or attachment, and the

five hindrances are manifestations of all these things. People in the world say all sorts of foolish things about what *upādāna* is, what craving is. But here we're seeing through bare experience what these things are. We're not just reading the menu, we taste the food. We see what craving is and how pernicious it is, how difficult it is to track down. *Upādāna* is really slippery but once we actually see through it that leads to the eradication of the five hindrances. Each one of these five hindrances is a manifestation of craving. Once we actually see that, we understand how craving is so deep and why it is so hard to uproot. The only way to uproot craving and attachment is through the practise of The Eightfold Path, culminating in the *jhānas*.

These are the insights we get through contemplating the five hindrances. We know the five hindrances completely. We know the antidotes and we become one who, as it says in the *suttas*, can enter the *jhānas* with ease, with no difficulty, with no trouble. We know the way in, we know the obstacles, and we know the remedies. Why should there be any difficulty? We're focussing on the practice that leads to *jhāna* and on the way we're gaining some very powerful insights into the nature of craving and *upādāna*.

So please bear these words in mind. May they bear fruit in your practice.

17 I KNOW YOU MĀRA

25th August 2004

Almost a month of the rains retreat has gone. When it comes to the opportunity for practise it doesn't get any better than this. We should recall the opportunities that we have and put everything we've got into the practice. Whatever duties you have to do, do them thoroughly, and when there's nothing to do, then do nothing. Sit in your hut or walk on your meditation path, and enjoy the freedom of having to do nothing.

We have to go in the direction of working and meeting our responsibilities so often that sometimes we just aspire and long for the opportunity to practise. In a monastery such as this, which is so well established, so well supported, and so well looked after there's nothing much we have to do. So when you are in your hut and have this opportunity, make sure that you put great effort into doing nothing.

Controlling and Wanting

Too many people still do things. You only have to look at the *sutta* we are going to chant next week, the Anattalakkhana Sutta (SN 22.59), to see that each of these *khandhas* (aggregates) – *rūpa*, the body; *vedanā*, the feelings, pleasure and pain; *saññā*, your perceptions; *saṅkhāra*, mental-formations, your will; even *viññāṇa*, consciousness – is out of your control. There is *no* self in there that controls these things. The Buddha said in the Anattalakkhana Sutta that if any of the *khandhas* were a self, you would be able to say, "Oh, may my consciousness be like this. Oh, may it not be like that. Oh, may my feelings be such. May my pleasure and pain not be like that." The Buddha said we cannot do that because there is no self; it is all *anattā* (non-self), and we do not control those things. It's a powerful statement! The Buddha said we should reflect upon the truth of *anattā* again and again.

We may not personally have seen *anattā*, but at least we can have faith in the Buddha's teachings, clearly repeated so many times, that the five *khandhas* are nothing to do with us. They are out of our control. So why, when we meditate, do we try to control these things? Why do we try pushing and pulling the mind to be just as we want it to be, to get rid of this, and to get hold of that? Surely we should have got

the message by now. It states in the *suttas* that the more one controls, the more one is going against the Buddha's advice. So our path of practice is to be able to sit down and learn what it means to be able to let go, to go in the opposite direction of the *āsava*, (the out-flowings of the mind), and to just sit and be patient.

The problem is that people don't know how to be truly patient. Whenever you are sitting down doing nothing, you want something. Craving and desire come up, and they take you away from this moment, and prevent you from going inwards. Remember, wanting is that force which takes you away from *whatever you are experiencing now*, into something in the future, into fantasies or dreams. According to the Sappurisa Sutta the *jhānas* and Enlightenment, are always different from what you imagined them to be. '*Yena yena hi maññanti tato taṃ hoti aññatha*' (MN 113). So, how can you actually want anything, if you are not sure what it is that you want?

We have the simile from the *suttas* of the person who has fallen in love with the most beautiful girl in the country, but he doesn't know what she looks like, or where she lives, what her name is, or even if she exists. Some monks, novices, and *anagārikas* in this monastery have already fallen in love with *nimmittas* and *jhānas*, even when they don't know what they are, where they are, or whether they even exist or not. So why are you craving for something that you don't know? Leave all that alone. Let it go, until there is no wanting at all, so that the mind is content, still, and peaceful. Your whole job in this meditation retreat is just to be peaceful, to be still. Make that your goal. Not *jhānas*, not *nimmittas*, not Enlightenment. Make it your goal to be as peaceful as you possibly can, to lessen those desires, to stop the mind moving and keeping the mind still to stop the mind being disturbed by you getting in control and wanting things. Remember that the greatest controller of all is Māra.

Knowing Māra

Māra lives in the *paranimmittavasavattī* realm. It is the realm where 'will', *cetanā*, has power over others' creations, others' *nimmittas*. It is almost like the realm of control freaks. Know that control freak within yourself; understand that Māra is the 'doer' inside you. He's always trying to push and pull you, saying, "Come on; don't get so sleepy". "Come on, put forth some effort". "Come on, get into a *jhāna*".

"Come on, who do you think you are?" "Come on, how long have you been a monk, how long have you got left of your retreat?" "Come on, get going." That is Māra! In answer say, "I know you Māra", and then Māra disappears. If you don't know Māra, if you don't know the control freak within you, then you will always get tense and frustrated.

You can practise for years and years, and get very close to your goal, because Māra gives you a few crumbs every now and again. But you will never get a full meal you will never get into the *jhānas*. Remember that the *jhānas* are the places that Māra can't go, where Māra is blindfolded. These are the places where Māra is banned. Why? Because anyone who has experienced a *jhāna* knows that in those stages there is no control left: the potential to 'do' is gone, and that potential to 'do' is Māra. So, are you giving Māra an opportunity when you are meditating? Are you taking control, trying to steer this meditation, do it this way, do it that way? If you are, you will find that you don't get peaceful.

I answered a question in the interviews by saying that we know we are going in the right direction if we relax, if it leads to peace, to a sense of freedom, to inner happiness. The Buddha's advice to Upāli and Mahāpājapatī, the first Bhikkhunī, was that if the training leads to things like dispassion and *upasama*, you know it is the Dhamma, the truth, the Vinaya. This beautiful word *upasama* means peace, quietness, stillness. When things settle down and there is no more business that is *upasama*. You can understand what that really means, because when you are meditating, you experience that peace, that *upasamasukha*. The happiness of peace, just being still; there is nothing to do, and there are no burdens. You are resting not just the body, but also the mind. Then you know: this is the path, this is the Dhamma and the Vinaya of the Buddha. The Buddha made it very clear that what leads to peace is the Dhamma, so use that as a check to make sure you are going in the right direction. See how peaceful you can become. Don't just see how much you can crave and how much will power you can develop. Instead see how much 'peace power' you can develop.

Giving Up Time

It sometimes happens, when you start with this way of peace, that you have to go through dullness. That's just old *kamma*; bear with that. It will disappear, and when it disappears, you get energy. This beautiful energy is not the restless energy which comes from struggling and fighting, but a beautiful, peaceful energy. When you build up that peace one of the great results is that you develop this fabulous mindfulness. What I am talking about is 'super-power mindfulness'.

One of the ways of developing 'super-power mindfulness' is by what I call, 'total listening'. Whatever you are doing, you have to be totally there. Because listening is an important sense faculty, 'total listening' is a great metaphor for this brilliant mindfulness. So whatever you are doing, you are totally listening to what's happening. Even when you are practising present moment awareness meditation, you are totally there, totally listening, totally feeling. One hundred percent of the mind is in the moment. When you understand the idea of what I mean by 'total listening', you also understand what this mindfulness is and how it becomes so powerful. When we say 'total listening' we give it everything we've got, and then we find we have more to give to our mindfulness, to our alertness. We feel more deeply, we know more powerfully, and then mindfulness starts to grow and grow. It grows because we are not doing anything. The mind is still, it's not going away from 'total listening'.

When we look at the concept we call time, we see time only moves because of craving, because of doing things. When we stop doing things, when we stop planning, when we stop hurrying and hastening through the rounds of rebirth, time stops in this beautiful timelessness. Whenever we want something, we are already making the future. What is it going to be like? What is going to happen next? Where are we going to go next? And then we start going into ill will or guilt, we start looking into the past. It's all just craving or ill will. That's why I say the present moment is the place where you will be free from those things. Once craving and ill-will stop, time stops, and then the idea of where we are going and what we are going to do next just disappears. The mind becomes still in time and we experience the beautiful timeless present.

Those of you who get into deep meditation, know what that feels like. Time has no meaning anymore. You sit there for hours and who cares. You don't really know,

you don't have a clue, that so many hours have gone past. Time has lost its meaning and you are free from that burden.

Māra is the entity inside the wrist watch, inside the clock, that is ticking. He's trying to control you. But when we go beyond time, then Māra gets very worried. He only goes to such places with difficulty. So remember, when you are meditating, when you are walking, whatever you are doing, to see if you can allow that peace, that stillness in time to develop. You don't know what day or hour it is; you just get up in the morning and meditate. Who cares what the time is? If you are tired, you can go back to bed again. Don't count how many hours you sleep, don't count how many hours you meditate; just get rid of that time business. In the Bhaddekaratta Sutta (MN 131) it says, "Give up the past, give up the future". And the Dhammapāda also says, "Give up the past, give up the future". When you have given up the past and the future, the next thing to give up is the present. Give up all time. If you can start to do that – giving up time fully – reflect on what it means. Use your insight practice to understand what timelessness truly is. Then you will understand how freeing that is. Straightaway you get a perspective, a reflection that helps in your meditation: the reflection of timelessness – no time.

So, when we are meditating, we can use these little words like 'timeless', 'no time', 'free of time', 'total listening', 'fully alert', 'fully aware in this very moment', as ways to remind ourselves, and to point the way in our meditation. Craving and ill-will take us away from this moment. They take us away from where we are supposed to be going, which is inside of everything. If we keep being taken away from this moment, then we will never gain *jhānas*, and we will never get Enlightened. We are always going somewhere else, never right inside.

No One in Here

Later in the retreat, we will start talking about the citadels of the 'self', the 'knower' and the 'doer'; they're right in the centre of this. To get close to them is so difficult because the 'doer' is always pushing us away. The 'doer' doesn't want to be seen for what it truly is: just a phantom, a fake. That's why it always pushes us away so that

we can't understand it or see it as it truly is. It is the same with the 'knower'; it is so hard to see. But by stillness we get to understand what 'knowing' and 'doing' is.

We have to find that place where nothing moves. We can understand what it is: timelessness is one of the places where you get the feeling that nothing is moving. It is *upasama*, peaceful. Stay there, don't do anything. Never ask your self, "What should I do next?" You have lost the plot if you say that. What we are doing now, that is the only question. What we are doing now is to know more fully. Stay there, be more patient. Give up wanting, give up trying to do things. Stop trying to change the five *khandhas*; just leave them alone. Stop that process of Māra controlling and interfering; say, "Māra, I know you!" When Māra scurries away, with head bowed, that is when Māra is known to the monk, novice, *anagārika*, layman, or the laywoman; then Māra doesn't control. You are on the way to *Nibbāna*, the cessation of all things. When this happens, you can see that things stop.

Why do you always try to control these things? It is all impermanent; it rises and falls despite of you. If the world was under your control, you could actually control this business of impermanence: this night and day, things coming and going, happiness and pleasure, dark and light. How many times have you tried to control these things? All that happens is that it changes anyway. It is beyond you. So, *anicca* means uncertain, out of control; it come and goes as it wishes, without you being able to force it this way or that. That's why if you have a good meditation, fine. If you have a bad meditation, fine. Don't blame yourself. Don't become proud because you got a good meditation, thinking, "Now I can meditate". If anyone of you have had a good meditation and think, "Now I can do it", the next meditation will be disappointing.

You experience that many times because that's the nature of things. It is *anicca*, that's all: rising and falling, coming and going. So stop messing around! Allow it to be. Be content with the bad meditation, and be content with the good meditation. As my first meditation teacher said, there is no such thing as a bad meditation. There is just a meditation; it goes according to its causes and results. How can you control the results, when they depend on causes. It's just nature, that's all. It's nature doing its thing. You have to be part of this and let go. Enjoy the nature, the mind just

unfolding. In fact, the more you let go and get out of the way of this process, the faster, more peaceful, and beautiful it becomes. The more you get out of the way, the more powerful is the path. You disappear. You are just being a 'nobody'.

Vanish into emptiness when you meditate, so that there's no one in there. You can do the perception of *anattā saññā*. *Anattā saññā* is the perception that no one is in here. What I mean by developing these perceptions is that when you are on the walking path, you start thinking about these things. You use your thoughts to focus your mind on what these things mean. At least you have enough knowledge and enough faith to know that there's nobody in here. The 'knower' is no one. It is just a process of consciousness. When form hits the eye, there is a conjunction of these two, there's contact. With contact, there's a sense impression, that's all. When the mind object meets mind consciousness the two come together, that's mind contact. From mind contact you get *vedanā*. That's all it is.

So when you understand what these things are, you see there's nobody in here. Even if you can't know that is true for yourself, because you have not seen it with wisdom yet, at least you've heard it with faith. Try it out. Imagine there are no other monks here. Imagine that things are just not there. Imagine that. Put yourself in that position, and then meditate from that perspective of non-self, seeing that as an imaginary place where you meditate. Start your meditation with that perception. Start your walking meditation with the thought that there's nobody else here. The Buddha said that the 'controller', the 'doer', the 'knower', is just a process, not a person, not a thing, not a being. So just walk, just sit, and see what happens. When you start with that perception, that perception of true Dhamma, it's amazing how easy it is to meditate.

It's only because of delusion that meditation is hard. It's only because of not seeing things clearly or forgetting that you get frustrated and lost in your meditation. If you put that *anattā saññā* right in the beginning, as a perspective from where to start, then how can you fail in you meditation? There can be no failure at all. because there's no one to fail. So how can you even call it failure, or good meditation, or bad

meditation? All this doing and measuring and controlling is cut off by that perspective.

When you train yourself to look at your meditation, your walking meditation, your sleeping, eating, or whatever else you do, from that perspective, then you keep the perspective of nobody in here throughout the day, *anattā saññā*. When eating, it's just food going into the body, that's all. There's nobody tasting this food, just tastables tasted by the tongue: the two coming together and making contact. The contact generates a feeling, that's all it is. Keep those perspectives. Cold is just body feeling: when that body comes into contact with cold air *vedanā* arises as a result. It's just the process, that's all. Big deal! Pain in the body is just body consciousness and body object coming together. There is contact and because of that there is feeling; that's all it is. Look at life like that. Look at each moment like that.

Remember *anattā saññā*. It makes life so much easier when there is no one in here. And if you do that – *anattā, anattā, anattā*; no self, no controller, no doer, no knower, nothing in there, just emptiness, just a process – imagine what would happen if you then sit down to watch the breath: it would be so easy to do, because there's no one doing it. Just the same, too often we get involved in something and we just mess it up. If we let the tree grow by itself, it grows very well. But if we start to mess around with it, pulling it this way, bending it that way, making it like this or that, we usually mess up. When we get involved with nature we usually mess it up. Certainly that's the case with meditation.

When we get involved in trying to do a little bit of controlling, it doesn't go well. If you try to watch the breath with control, the breath is never smooth. When you just leave the breath alone, when you are busy doing something else, then you don't control it at all and the breath is so smooth and natural. For many people, when they first start breath meditation, they start by watching the breath and they are controlling it at the same time. That's why it gets uncomfortable. They can't see themselves controlling. People have asked me, "When I watch the breath, it's so hard and painful. When I don't watch the breath, it's nice and peaceful. What's going on?" I tell them that when they are watching the breath, they are controlling it, because

they've got into that habit. Whatever we watch, we get involved with; we control it as if it was ours. Whatever we feel is ours, whatever we sense is ours, we feel we have to do something about it, we have to control it.

When you think, 'This is not mine, nothing to do with me'; it is the same as the simile that the Buddha gave about the grass, sticks, and leaves in the Jeta Grove (SN 35, 101). Somebody collects them and burns them. Who cares? Because they do not belong to you, you don't care. It is the same with your meditation. Does your meditation belong to you? Does your mind belong to you? Does your *vedanā*, will or consciousness belong to you? Can't you look at your mind and the body like the grass and leaves outside? They don't belong to you. They are not yours.

So, why are you striving so hard in this meditation? What are you doing? Who is doing it and why? When you actually look at it from the perspective of Dhamma, from *anattā saññā*, you can understand what your mistake is. You are controlling things. You are building up through striving and controlling this huge ego of a 'self'. You become the meditator. You become the one who strives. You become the person who's putting all this effort into your meditation. When you do that, you find you get frustrated because you can see that *anicca* is so uncertain. Whatever you want it to be, it becomes something else, something different. You just can't do it. You can't succeed in your meditation. You try for years and sometimes you get it right, but often you get it wrong. So, what are you doing wrong? You are 'doing', that's what's wrong. Leave it alone, don't do anything – disengage, detach, renounce!

Renunciation

The second factor of the Eightfold Path is Right Intention, *sammā saṅkappa*. Right intention is *nekkhamma saṅkappa*, the intention to renounce. What a beautiful word that is, 'to renounce'. Some of you are monks, have you renounced yet? Many people say they are 'renunciants', but in fact they have only renounced some things. Maybe you have renounced some things. Maybe you have renounced TV and sex? There are many other things you could yet renounce. Renounce your body. Renounce your mind. Renounce your meditation. So, just let go!

Whatever the mind wants to do, that's fine, because it doesn't belong to me. "Mind, you are just like the twigs, grass, leaves, and sticks of the Jeta Grove, you don't belong to me. You are nothing to do with me. You are not mine, because the Buddha said there is nothing that is mine, there is nothing that belongs to me."

If we can abandon and let go of all this, it doesn't mean we just abandon meditation and sleep all day. We abandon sleep as well. We abandon everything. The abandonment becomes the movement of the mind that frustrates Māra the controller. *Nekkhamma* (giving up the world) is the metal stake through the heart of Māra the demon. It kills Māra, because Māra can't stand renunciation. We give up, renounce, abandon. With that renunciation in our meditation, we sit there and just renounce everything: "this isn't mine, nothing to do with me". That renunciation, non-doing, non-controlling, takes away the movement of mind. The reason why the mind is restless and tired, the underlying cause of the hindrances, is seen and abandoned. The hindrances just unravel. Sensory desires, where can they come from? Ill-will is gone. Restlessness is just doing things. Worry is about the past. Who cares about the past? That's all gone. Sloth and torpor just fades away because the cause of sloth and torpor is 'doing'.

We are tired, we think a lot. We do the work in the office or the work of being an abbot. The more we do, the more tired the mind becomes. That is the nature of the mind. When we don't do anything, the mind gets so bright. When I am on retreat there are days when I just sit there doing nothing in the mornings and afternoons. All the energy starts to build up and I can feel it. These energies build up because I am just sitting there doing nothing. I just watch. All the energy of my life is just going into 'knowing'.

Be very careful not to allow any of that energy to go into controlling or doing anything. As an abbot, I have to do that controlling for the rest of the day, but there is a time for non-doing, non-controlling. There is a time when I meditate; then I am not an abbot, I am not in-charge. That is the time when I completely let go and abandon everything.

As the Buddha said in the Indriya Saṃyutta (SN 48), if we make this abandoning the main thing, make it our *ārammaṇa*, our mind state, we attain *samādhi*, we attain one-pointedness of mind. That's what the Buddha said, and the Buddha didn't say things that don't work. We make abandoning our practice by abandoning the thought that I am in control of this meditation. We abandon all of this doing business, this measuring, this judging good and bad. "I am going to abandon all of that", and then, the Buddha says, we get *samādhi*, we get one-pointedness of mind.

Try it! It works, if you've got the guts to go against Māra. The trouble is we still want to control a little bit. We still want to be the one who is doing this. We want to be the 'me' who gets the *jhānas*. We can't do that, but when we disappear, get out of the way, give up all hope, all wanting, then real letting go, real renunciation, real *nekkhamma*, just happens. That's what is needed. We can use *anattā saññā* to help us push that letting go button. We fill our minds with non-self.

The Buddha's teaching in the Anattalakkhana Sutta (SN 22.59) clearly says that the five *khandhas* are not mine. So, what is this thing we are trying to control? We are trying to control things that just do not belong to us. Get out of the way! No wonder you get frustrated. No wonder suffering comes. We are trying to control things that aren't ours. What do we expect but suffering. We are doing things that are absolutely stupid. This delusion is so intense with many of us. You keep on meditating and then you complain to me that it's not working, and you are fed up. How stupid can you be? How can there be suffering for us if we disappear and there's no one left? It's not suffering anymore; it's just cause and effect, the world coming and going, the five *khandhas* going around. Now they're happy, now they're sad. There's no mental suffering left when we let go and disengage. We disengage from *saṃsāra*, we disengage from the world. The five *khandhas* are just the world of the five *khandhas*, nothing to do with us; they're *khandhas* that's all. It's just like the weather – storms, rain, wind, and then sunlight and peace again. It's cold and then it's hot again. You can't control these things. So why don't you shut up and just stop arguing with nature? Stop arguing with the nature of your body, the nature of you mind. You know what I mean by arguing? It's the argument, which keeps on saying, "Come on, get in there, do some meditation". "That's not good enough." "That was a good

one." "Come on, the next one will be a good one." "Come on, meditate longer." "Don't sleep so much." "Do it this way"." You are arguing with nature, with your non-self. Forget all of that. Abandon! Let go! Sit there and do nothing and you'll find that the mind does start to become still.

Abandoning the Hindrances

The five hindrances are the cause for the lack of *samādhi*. The lack of *samādhi* is not caused by lack of effort. For most people in the West, we make too much effort. We just don't know how to let go, how to relax. Lack of *samādhi* is caused by the hindrances being too active. So, put your focus on what those hindrances are, how they are caused, where they come from and why. The hindrances are the fuel for *avijjā*, delusion. The Buddha said that delusion does not have a cause, but is fuelled by the hindrances. The more the hindrances are present, the more delusion is solidified, strengthened, and sustained. So abandon those hindrances by abandoning the underlying cause of the hindrances, which is 'doing' and controlling coming from the sense of a self, and you will find that delusion vanishes. Like the mist in the morning, it just dissipates and clears. That happens when you start abandoning hindrances through the reflections of *anicca*, *anattā*, and even *dukkha* (impermanence, non-self, and unsatisfactoriness). Keep those clearly in your mind and the hindrances won't have much of a chance.

When the hindrances aren't present, there is nothing between the mind and the *jhānas*. You know that! That's what the *suttas* and the Kruba Ajahns say; you have heard that from me many times. Many of you know from your own experience that when the hindrances go, you get into deep meditation, even *jhānas*. So the hindrances are the problem. It's not you, your ability or lack of ability. It's not that you aren't trying hard enough, or meditating hard enough. Look at which hindrances are present; focus on them, understand them, get to know them. They are the enemy. They are the ones that need to be overcome, so understand how to overcome them. Craving and ill-will arise from doing things all the time. Present moment awareness and silence will undermine craving and ill-will. When we get into present moment awareness and silence, craving and ill will are almost dead. Our restlessness is almost gone as well. The sleepiness that many of you complain about, don't worry about it. Don't worry

about anything because worrying is just more controlling. That's old *kamma*: you've done too much and the mind is not bright. Mindfulness is weak simply because we have not been putting energy into the right place. So just allow it to be. Be with sloth and torpor. If we really leave it alone, it just vanishes. It's a marvellous experience to have that happening. Just be patient, don't do anything. Be kind and be compassionate. Don't control, let go.

The Buddha said in the Anattalakkhana Sutta, "If the mind with sloth and torpor were mine, then I could tell it not to be this way. But because the mind isn't my 'self', I can't control this mind". So leave it alone; allow it to be and don't get involved. Don't go making more delusion. After a short while, it's fascinating to see sloth and torpor dissipate like the mist in the early morning or like darkness when the sun comes out. You don't have to wish the darkness away in the morning. You know if you just wait, soon due to cause and effect and the laws of nature, the sun will come up. The sun comes up and you start to see clearly without your flashlight. This is actually what happens with the vanishing of sloth and torpor. When this happens you get this beautiful, peaceful strength of mindfulness – mindfulness which doesn't move; it's just there, just watching. It doesn't move because there's no illusory self pushing it backwards and forwards. This house-builder – the controller, the doer, the illusion of a self which thinks, "I am in control, I am in charge of this whole process of meditation" – is completely taken away.

Just be still, and wait in that stillness. You are not asking for anything, you are not expecting anything. You don't want anything, because all expecting and wanting is the movement of the mind that takes you away from stillness. You are into peace, into stillness. If you get peace and stillness, that's good enough. You just sit there watching, and the peace will consolidate. The stillness becomes even more frozen. Just watch as all these stages of meditation happen. The stages of meditation are not something that we make happen. They are just sign posts on a journey. It's just like when I'm sitting in the van going into town. I don't do the driving; I just watch. Now we go through Serpentine, now through Byford, now through Armadale, now through Perth and into Nollamara. They're just stages on the journey. We watch, literally doing nothing, being still one hundred per cent, being peaceful. We see present moment awareness. Now there's silence. We didn't do that; the silence came by

itself. And then the breath comes up. We didn't do that; the breath just came. It is just the territory we are passing through. Now the breath is beautiful. It's OK. That's neat, but we don't do anything. Now the *nimmitta* comes up. We never looked for it, we never asked it to come; or told it to go away; it just happens naturally. The *nimmitta* is just so brilliant and beautiful. Then we are in *jhānas* and we keep on going. All these things just happen naturally, all by themselves. We didn't do a thing. All we did was to maintain our peace. We kept the stillness, and so the hindrances never had a chance. Māra the controller is completely confounded. We went in a different direction, the direction of a Buddha, not the direction of the world. We went according to *anattā*. There's no one in here, so how could we do anything? We didn't follow delusion; we followed wisdom, the path of the saints. That's how we meditate. That's how we get this beautiful, powerful mindfulness.

Once we get into this way of meditation it is so easy. It's an easy thing to do with so much joy. There's no pride because there's no self. There's no saying, "I am a great meditator" or "I am a terrible meditator". There's no frustration when sometimes the meditation doesn't work; it's just cause and effect, it's not our meditation. You're content, peaceful, and still. You keep doing the work which is no work. Peacefulness and stillness, these things happen by themselves. It's just like the worker who goes to work everyday and on Friday receives his pay package. He doesn't expect the pay package every day. Nature is that way. You can't get paid every moment. But you can be at peace with every moment; you can be still and content with every moment. You can renounce doing and controlling every moment; and confound Māra every moment. You just say 'no' to the controller, 'no' to Māra, and let go, do nothing. No one is in here. There's nothing! That way, we can really get into this meditation. We find that this is so easy. Anytime you get that powerful meditation, it blows your mind away.

Stepping Over the Stream

Follow that path. Sit in your hut. You may have been meditating for years and still you haven't seen it, and then suddenly you let go and my goodness, you bliss out. That is how it is. It's so easy! This is how you get into the *jhānas* like the great monks and nuns of old, and the great monks of today. Delusion is the problem; not

seeing clearly. Sometimes people get insight and become full *Arahants* in just one moment. They get that insight after the *jhāna*, that's the point. Even for an *Anāgāmī*, *jhānas* are so easy. Why are *jhānas* so easy for an *Anāgāmī*, let alone for an *Arahant*? *Jhānas* are easy for them because they see 'non-self'. They are not controllers anymore. Ill-will and the *rāja* of sensory desire just disappear. They see that there's no one in there – no self. That's what makes the meditation easy.

Remember that this meditation of non-self has two important things that go together: concentration (*samādhi*) and insight (*vipassanā*), they are not separate things. Ajahn Chah always said that *vipassanā* and *samatha* (calm) are two sides of the same coin. When we have insight and we use that insight, that knowledge and understanding of the *suttas*, we recognize *anattā*, non-self. If there is nobody in charge, then who is meditating? If there is someone meditating then the hindrances are just around the corner. You are undermining it already; you are feeding those hindrances. The hindrances in turn are feeding the delusion and it keeps on going. One day you will give 'giving up' a try by not doing anything, just sitting there with no expectations and no measuring.

People sometimes come to me and say they tried that and it didn't work. What do you mean it didn't work? It didn't work because you want it to work. Why do you want anything? Give up all wanting. Give up all these expectations and this measuring, and then it happens. When you don't want something, then it comes. So, give it up, abandon, renounce. That's what the Buddha said we should do. You've heard that before and you know it's true. Stop messing around by trying hard. Go back to your huts, get inspired, and just sit there, and remember that there's no one in here who is going to do anything. You just stop.

The story of the little novice comes to mind. Ajahn Chah was giving such a long talk and the little novice thought, 'When is Ajahn Chah going to stop?' 'The Rains Retreat has been going on for four weeks, when is this Rains Retreat going to end?' 'When am I going to get *nimmittas*?' Stop for goodness sake – stop wanting. That novice stopped. He was just a little novice who had not been meditating for any longer than some of you. The little novice just stopped and went into a *jhāna*. He

came out afterwards as probably the happiest novice in all of Ubon. He was blissed out. He had pressed the 'letting go button'. If he had been smart, he would have understood lots about *anattā*. He would also have understood how to 'bliss out', how *jhānas* happen, and how to get into them.

All of you who are still driving your meditation, steering it this way and that way with your foot still on the pedal, let it go. Our new monastery car has cruise control you press a button and take you foot off the pedal; this is like *jhāna* meditation. It's all cruise control. Press the 'letting go button' and take you feet off the pedals. Then your car just goes smoothly along the freeway to *Nibbāna*. That's what happens when you let go.

So, this is what we're supposed to be doing. Do it! Stop! We find that the mind goes into *samādhi* by itself; it goes in and in, because peace starts to build up. That peace is happiness and happiness is power. We get into this 'letting go' business. But be careful, because sometimes if you are not used to abandoning, you can get into controlling again. Some people get *nimmittas* and they think, "Wow". Then they try to make it this way and that way, and they wonder if it is the right or wrong *nimmitta*. Stop that! Just be at peace whatever happens. You can get the most stupid, ridiculous *nimmitta*, but just be at peace. Who cares? It's just nature, that's all. Things arising, things passing away, they are nothing to do with you. So it's just the same as the grass and leaves in the Jeta Grove, they are not me, not mine. Here we are just sitting: stupid and beautiful things happen in our mind, but they are nothing to do with us. Beautiful *nimmittas* arise, but they're not ours. Leave them alone, and then the *nimmitta* will stay with you. If you try to own them, grab them, possess them, they disappear. Leave them alone and they just develop, grow, and blossom. You will go into this wonderful place of non-self, where the 'doer' has gone and the potential to do has also vanished.

The potential to do has completely vanished. That is a signpost of the *jhānas*, especially the second *jhāna*. Oh, what bliss! Nothing to do and you can't do anything. Imagine the peace and stillness – nothing moves. The energies just keep building up, just bliss upon bliss upon bliss. The energy of stillness is now so strong.

There is just so much happiness. That happiness is the power of the mind. We come out of those power stages and we still maintain lots of power. Want to remember past lives? It's easy. Psychic powers, this is where they come from. Use that super-power mindfulness. You can remember what has gone on in your *jhāna* and see the beautiful, profound teachings of the Buddha, how true they all are. We see how it is that the Buddha is such a fantastic teacher. He taught and taught, banging on people's heads all the time, but still people often don't see it. There it is, in black and white, so obvious and clear. And what do people do? "Right, I am going to do Enlightenment now. Right, I am going to strive now. I am going to struggle. I am going to get this. I am going to do… I, I, I". Just abandon all of that silly stuff if you want to walk in the footsteps of the Buddha. Otherwise you can be here for 30, 40, 50, 60 years and still be going in the wrong direction.

It's just a path to Enlightenment. The Buddha's simile is crossing from this shore to the other shore. This shore to the other shore is narrower than the stream which runs through our monastery. You can step over from one side to the other side, it's so narrow. The trouble is people keep going up and down the banks in the same old direction. Going up is wanting and craving. Going down is wanting to get rid of things, ill-will. Now wanting now wanting to get rid of; desire and aversion; going up and down in the same way. Not seeing the other way of going at right angles to the way you are used to go. It's a way of acting which you have never tried before – going at right angles to everything you have been conditioned to or done in the past. It's doing something that is really original: stopping. And then we find that we can just step over the stream and we get into *jhānas* so quickly. If you understand what that step is, you understand how to let go and how to get *Nibbāna*. Do that plenty of times and you know that the way across the stream is by abandoning, letting go, renouncing, non-self, freedom, liberation.

Conclusion

So, there it is for you. Don't mess around. Don't do anything. See if you can be the courageous ones, the ones who do things that no other people do. Don't go in the way of the ordinary person. Go the way of the *Ariyan* – the way of those who have abandoned their 'self', the empty ones, those who are free.

18 BETWEEN THE OBSERVER AND THE OBSEREVED

15th of June 2005

The Buddha said that anyone who fulfils the *ānāpānasati* meditation also completes the four *satipaṭṭhāna*. So that means that anyone who wants to do *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation can just carry on watching the breath. *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation is *ānāpānasati* meditation. It is useful to remember that *ānāpānasati* according to the Buddha equals *satipaṭṭhāna*. Even the first four stages of *ānāpānasati* fulfil *kāyagatasati*, the mindfulness of the body. The Buddha said you don't need to do anymore. But what does that truly mean?

This evening I want to explore the meaning of *sati*. There are two parts to mindfulness that you should always bear in mind. One part is to understand that mindfulness is the power of the mind to see what's going on. It is part of the brightness of the mind, the power of the mind to be alert, to be aware, and to pick up what is going on. Many people make the mistake of thinking that mindfulness is just mindfulness, and they don't understand and appreciate that it has different degrees of intensity and power. The normal mindfulness that people carry around in their daily lives is so weak that they hardly see anything at all. Ordinary mindfulness is the mindfulness of the ordinary person going about their daily business; sure they're aware, but they only see a portion of what's out there. One of the reasons for that is because their mind is not empowered yet. It's like going through life in semi-darkness. All they see are silhouettes and shapes; life has no texture, no detail. They've missed too much of what's going on out there. It's called dullness of the mind.

When you've experienced a *jhāna* your mind is empowered and you understand what mindfulness can be. It's so sharp, so penetrating, that it's like a big searchlight. Whatever it looks at, it picks up everything. I've noticed that when I'm shaving in the morning, if there is not much light, I can't see my stubble, but if there is a bright light, if the light in the bathroom is in the right position, I can see so much stubble on my cheeks and chin. That's a little example of how, when there is little light you can't see what's really there, but when you put your glasses on and there is a big light you

see so much detail. It was always there but before you couldn't notice it. That stubble stands for the defilements; they are the stubble on your *citta* making it unbeautiful and ugly.

So, that is the power of mindfulness. Another important thing is where you focus that mindfulness, where you direct it. Some people say you can be mindful of anything. You can be mindful when you are sweeping the ground, and when you are eating. Some people even say you can be mindful of sex and all these other crazy ideas. But this is only being *aware* of the object of your consciousness. You can be aware of sweeping, you can be aware of laying a brick, you can be aware of putting food into your mouth, but that is not where mindfulness should really be put. I'm going to be really controversial here. *Mindfulness should not even be on your body*, that's not the point of what we are doing.

We all know the Buddha's teaching on meditation if we read the *suttas*. According to the Buddha – in essence – meditation is all about overcoming the five hindrances – suppressing them, smashing them – to get to the *jhānas*, so that you can see the way things truly are. Meditation is suppressing the five hindrances, but what has mindfulness to do with the five hindrances? The path can also be described as abolishing and smashing the *kilesas*; that is greed, hatred and delusion, or *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. The Kruba Ajahns always talk about greed, hatred, and delusion. Here we don't mention those things enough. Certainly in my days as a young monk every talk would drum it into you: greed, hatred, and delusion. There wasn't a talk where it wasn't mentioned ten, twenty, or thirty times.

The Right Place for Mindfulness

The point is, where do greed, hatred, and delusion live? Where do the five hindrances live? Do they live in your body? Do they live in the food you eat? Do they live in the bricks you lay or in the broom or the leaves that you are sweeping? This is an important point not only to your success as a monastic and to your harmony with friends and other monks, but also to your progress in meditation. Those hindrances do not live in the broom, nor do they live in your *citta*. They live between you and those objects. It's that space between the observer and the object that needs watching.

It's not what you are doing but how you are doing it that is important. That is where Māra plays. That is where the defilements live. That is the playground of greed, hatred, and delusion. Too often people put their mindfulness on the object or they put their mindfulness on the observer. They don't look at the middle – in between them – at 'the doing', 'the controlling', 'the ill will', and 'the aversion'. That's the reason I told somebody today the story of Ajahn Sumedho. When he was first in Wat Pah Pong he was having a hard time, and Ajahn Chah asked him, "Is Wat Pah Pong, suffering? Is Wat Pah Pong *dukkha*, Sumedho?" Ajahn Sumedho wasn't an Ajahn then. It was of course obvious to Ajahn Sumedho that Wat Pah Pong is not suffering.

So, what is suffering? Is the *citta* suffering? The suffering was how Ajahn Sumedho was regarding suffering. At that point he was adding it onto the experience. And if we don't put mindfulness in its right place then we miss that. We think it's Wat Pah Pong's fault, so we want to leave that monastery. We think it's our fault so we want to destroy ourselves or get into a guilt trip. This is wrong mindfulness; we're putting it in the wrong place. It's not the monastery's fault, and it's not the fault of that monk who is upsetting you. You are putting mindfulness in the wrong place if you put all of your focus on the object and think that is the cause of suffering. If you think the way to find liberation is to put mindfulness on the objects of your senses or to put it on who's watching or what's watching, that will never get you anywhere. We have to put the focus of our mindfulness on the space between the observer and the observed. That's where you find the play of greed and hatred, desires and aversions, wanting and disliking, and that's where you start to make something of this world which is not inherent in it.

In the very early days when the villagers had just discovered generators, amplifiers and loud speakers, there were big, noisy parties close to Wat Pah Nanachat in Bung Wai village. It was so loud that it would be like having a 'ghetto blaster' playing loud music right inside your hut. You couldn't sleep and meditation was very hard. The noise would go on until three o'clock in the morning, and by the time they had quietened down, that was the time the bell went for you to get up. So we hardly slept when those parties were on. First of all we complained to the villagers and said to the headman of the village, "Look, we are monks and you are supposed to be looking

after us, yet there is this loud music all night. Please turn it down or at least stop at twelve o'clock to give us two hours sleep." But they would never listen to us. We thought they might listen to Ajahn Chah. So we asked Ajahn Chah, "Can you please tell those villagers to turn the music down for a couple of hours." They would probably have listened to Ajahn Chah, but all Ajahn Chah said was, "It's not the sound that disturbs you, it's you disturbing the sound." That was a powerful teaching on mindfulness: the world never disturbs you; it's you disturbing the world. It's what you put in between you and the world that creates the problem. It's not the fault of the world, and it's not your fault; it's the disturbance that your delusion puts in the middle.

Looking at the Hindrances

When you put your mindfulness in the middle, then it's not what you are doing that matters but how you are relating to it. So please, put your mindfulness into the relationship that you have with the objects of mind in every moment. When you know where mindfulness should be put, the path of meditation, the path of Liberation, becomes very clear to you. You are looking directly at the hindrances; you are looking directly at the defilements.

Desire is your relationship between the *citta* and what you are experiencing, and the same for ill will 'I want, I don't want', craving, that's where the attachments are. It's the link, the unwholesome link that you make with the objects of your mind from moment to moment that causes delusion to grow and grow and grow.

The hindrances are the food of delusion. So it's not what is going on in this moment, it's not what you are experiencing. But don't misunderstand this to mean that you can be mindful of sex. This is missing the point. If you are mindful of what's between you and that act, you will see that there is craving there, there is fear, there's a lot of wanting. If there wasn't that wanting and that desire, you wouldn't be able to do anything like that. If there is peace, tranquillity, letting go, stillness, kindness, loving kindness, there would be no possibility of that sexuality ever arising in your mind. Mindfulness is focused on the wrong thing; just like Ajahn Sumedho's mindfulness when focused on Wat Pah Pong and all its faults, was focused on the wrong thing.

That's why Ajahn Chah said, "It's not Wat Pah Pong's fault; it's the way you are relating to it, the way you are looking at it, the way you are regarding it".

I have been practising that in my life for a long time now, especially when I have to do things every moment – when I have to do a job, travel, talk to people, relate to people, answer stupid questions, in particular when I am tired. Whatever it is, it's not the experience that is the cause of suffering to me, it's how I look at it, and how I am relating to this thing I am being asked to do. It's what's in between the observer and this thing, this task at hand. Even this talk now, it's not the talk itself but how I am relating to giving this talk that I am focusing on: I am making sure that it is a pure relationship. The mindfulness, the awareness of that can actually see where craving comes from, where desire comes from, where pride comes from, where ill will comes from. and where fear comes from because that is its breeding ground. If I'm tired when I start meditating, the tiredness is the object of the mind. It's what is between me and that tiredness that matters. Am I getting angry and upset at that tiredness? Why am I so tired? If you are angry or upset you are actually feeding the hindrances. It's not the tiredness that is the problem – tiredness is natural –but the disturbing of the tiredness. So, I have learned from Ajahn Chah's teaching: it's not the sound that disturbs you; it's you disturbing the sound. The problem is not that life or *saṃsāra* disturb you; it's the disturbance that you put in between the observer and the observed that is the problem.

Once you start to look at that you find out how easy it is to meditate. I don't know what you do when you sit down and you close your eyes, but don't just look at the object in your mind, look at how you are looking at it. Are you actually creating peace, are you creating freedom? Or are you just creating more desire, more wanting, more ill will, more frustration, or more fear? Look at where those things arise from, and once you get the idea of putting your mindfulness in that space between the observer and the observed, you will see the play of all the defilements. Where are they coming from? They are coming from the stupidity of the mind. It's only because you don't look in the right place that delusions can grow. Once you spot that area which is the cause and source of these defilements and hindrances, you can put your mindfulness there and see this whole process happening.

When you start to see that, it's so easy. Whatever you have to experience, even if it's a sore throat right now, a disappointment, or something that doesn't go right, who cares! It's not the event you have to experience; it's how you are experiencing it. So even if it is pain or things I don't like, I make sure I watch between the observer and that unpleasant experience and put peace and freedom there. I never put craving there, or desire, or wanting it to be different. I never put ill will there or the thought "Why me? This is not right". I never put control there, thinking I can do something about it. It's about 'non-doing', putting a piece of 'non-doing' between me and the object that I am looking at. It says in the Buddha's second sermon, the teaching on non-self, the Anattalakkhana Sutta (SN XXII. 59), that if these objects of the mind were yours to control, you could say to them, "May you be like this, may you be like that". These objects are *anattā*: not me, not mine, not a self; "you can't do anything about them", said the Buddha. So leave them alone, let them go. Whether it's *rūpa*, bodily things, material things, or whether it's feelings, perceptions, mental formations, or consciousness, leave them alone. They just arise and fall according to their conditions. It's not me, it's not mine, it's not a self; it's just an empty process, nothing to do with me. So, I can put that freedom between myself, as the observer, and the object.

This is just one way of looking at it. By saying the observer is not a self or an essential me, and by putting that peace between the observer and the observed, there is no possibility for the hindrances to grow. The hindrances are suppressed by that means. By focusing my mindfulness there rather than on my breath or whatever else, I'm suppressing the hindrances. When the hindrances are suppressed, especially desire and ill will –the wanting, controlling, doing – I also suppress all of the other hindrances. Sloth and torpor always comes – as you've heard me say before – because you have been controlling so much. You've been doing so much your mind is actually tired, and worn out. It wants to rest; it wants to turn off because it has no energy left. So if sloth and torpor is in front of me I just put peace between myself and the sloth and torpor. I do not put one of the first two hindrances between me and that sloth and torpor; I don't put desire, ill will, or fear there, and I have no sense of shame because I'm tired. It's just the body that's all. It's just the mind that's all. It's the five *khandhas* doing their thing, nothing to do with me. So I never feel any sense

of self with the sloth and torpor that comes up from time to time. I make peace with it, I allow it to be, and I let it go. I don't fight it, and by not fighting it I'm not cultivating the first two hindrances. Because I'm not cultivating the first two hindrances, mindfulness starts to grow in intensity. And because I am not feeding this 'doer', the mindfulness gets all the energy, the knower gets all the energy. The knower is mindfulness, and I'm energizing mindfulness.

Sloth and torpor don't last very long these days, I work so hard and sometimes can't find time to sleep. I should be the monk nodding most in this monastery due the amount of work I do, but I find I can go on retreats and sit in front of hundreds of people meditating and I feel awake. The reason I can do that is because I don't feed the defilements. Mindfulness is right there, not on the sloth and torpor, not on the knower, but in between them. I want to see what I'm doing with the sloth and torpor. Am I reacting with controlling? Am I just being one of the allies of Māra, the 'great controller'? I don't do that; I put my mindfulness between the sloth and torpor and the observer, making sure I'm being kind to the sloth and torpor. Kindness overcomes the ill will. Too often when you have sloth and torpor it is aversion that feeds it. It is the thought, 'I don't want it', that actually feeds sloth and torpor and makes it last longer, because it is taking the energy away from knowing.

It is the same with restlessness and remorse, when the mind is thinking all over the place. How are you relating to that? What are you doing with it? Put the energy of mindfulness between the knower and that restlessness. Don't put your mindfulness on aversion or on desire – 'I don't want to be restless' or 'This restlessness is good. I am thinking of all these fantasies and plans, about *Star Wars* or whatever' – but notice instead how you are regarding that thought pattern in your mind. If you see ill will or desire, those first two hindrances, stomp on them, stop them. If you see them as soon as they arise, then it is very easy to stop these things.

If you are not looking in the right place, you can't stop them. So once you put your mindfulness in the correct place, between the observer and the observed, between the *citta* and the restlessness, it's very easy to see why these things are going on. We can very often say that restlessness comes from discontent and that discontent comes from either ill will or desire, wanting something else, wanting something more, not wanting

this. So if we see where that discontent arises, that is, between you and that restless object, then you can stop it. It's fascinating to see how soon restlessness disappears, sometimes within seconds; you can just cut the thoughts that easily. But don't use force and effort, because that's aversion. You can't cut restlessness and remorse by being heedless, by waiting for them to stop, because underneath you want these things to carry on, you desire them, and you want them to happen. Look at what's between you and that thing, and then you see what's feeding them. So you put your mindfulness there, and then restlessness doesn't last very long. Nor does remorse, because remorse is always reacting to the past with desire and ill will.

It is the same with doubt, another form of restlessness. Look between you and the object that you are aware of and put peace in there, put acceptance in there, put patience in there. and you'll find out later you don't need to ask that question right now.

Tranquillity of Body and Mind

So, these beautiful qualities called patience, freedom, loving kindness, letting go, and peace, are the opposites of the first two hindrances, but you cannot put them in if you don't know where they go. You have to insert these qualities like a pill, or an injection, between the observer and the observed. Once you can see that space, you can put these things in there. Mindfulness sees that place, right skilful effort inserts that peace, that letting go, into that space, and the hindrances get suppressed. As the hindrances get suppressed, mindfulness grows in intensity simply because you are not feeding the restlessness or the sloth and torpor. Mindfulness becomes brighter. You're not doing anything so the energies of the mind are not wasted. Mindfulness gets brighter and brighter, and you can see much more of what I am talking about. You're more clearly aware of the space where mindfulness can be most effective. You find the object of your mind starts to become still, peaceful, and beautiful. Your meditation is going well; it's moving in the right direction.

Don't try to control things or you're putting your effort in the wrong spot. You are trying to control the object when you should be controlling what's in between, in the sense of stopping the hindrances from arising. The right effort is making sure you don't do anything stupid. We do stupid things all the time because we are not looking

in the right place. If we don't do anything stupid we find this meditation becomes so simple, so powerful, and so deep. It doesn't matter what you start off with. sometimes I don't even watch the breath; I just watch the present moment, whatever's happening now. How am I watching it? By making sure I make peace with this moment and by putting stillness into it. I make sure those five hindrances don't get involved, especially the first two hindrances, because they're the key ones. They are the hindrances that underlie the other three. By watching out for those first two hindrances, by being mindful, whatever object I'm watching just gets get brighter and brighter. Whatever I see, I see in more detail. It becomes more peaceful, and because I see it in more detail, it becomes more beautiful.

The object of the mind is not so important. You may even watch an ugly skull, and you may think, 'why would a skull ever turn into an object that I can use for *jhānas*?' But once your mindfulness grows and gets strong, that skull can turn into a *nimmitta*. It becomes the most beautiful skull you have ever seen in the world. You can do that with a piece of shit as well. I've never done this meditation, but it could obviously happen. I don't mean to offend anybody, but if you just put a bit of shit before you and watch the space between you and that object, making it still and peaceful, while visualizing it, after a while your mindfulness gets so strong that even that shit will turn into a *nimmitta*. Because your mindfulness is so strong whatever you look at becomes incredibly beautiful. Some of you have had that experience; it's a common meditation experience. The most unlikely objects can turn into beautiful *nimmittas*. Why does that happen? It's nothing to do with the object – it's not Wat Pah Pong that is suffering or Wat Pah Pong that is the path to *Nibbāna*, it's just the suppressing of the five hindrances, overcoming those defilements, the *kilesas*, and making the mind very strong.

Once you get into this practice the mindfulness gets strong. It sees where it should be focused. It focuses there and gets stronger. It sees the place where it should attend more and more and it becomes a self-supporting process. As it becomes still it becomes more powerful. As it becomes more powerful it becomes even more still. You have got this whole process, which is the path to *Nibbāna* that is repeated again and again in the *suttas*. Once you get joy coming up, which is the strength of

mindfulness, you get *pīti*, more joy, and then *passaddhi*, the tranquillity of the body and the mind. All these things happen simply because you are looking in the right place. Things start to quieten down, you are not moving anything, you are not doing things, and you are not disturbing anything.

The hindrances disturb the whole process; they create not just sloth and torpor but also restlessness and doubt. Without the first two hindrances you see that mindfulness gets strong; you see where you are disturbing the whole process. You get *passaddhi*, and as mindfulness gets stronger and stronger you get *sukha*, bliss, and that turns into *samādhi*, into *jhānas*.

It's an easy path; so if you haven't got those *jhānas* yet, why not? Are you putting your mindfulness in the correct place? Is the mindfulness getting stronger and stronger, more and more powerful? What is the problem with your meditation? Sometimes you say, "I've been watching the breath for years, why isn't it working?" It isn't working because of how you are watching the breath. You're watching the breath with controlling, with aversion, with wanting something. It's not the breath's fault or Wat Pah Pong's fault, it's the way you are regarding Wat Pah Pong and it's the way you are regarding the breath. So look at how you are watching the breath. Certainly that was very clear to me. When I was watching the breath, when I was trying to get somewhere, it would never settle down. It's obvious to me now that I was feeding the hindrances; I should have been watching out for the hindrances rather than the breath. Now I know how to watch the breath with peace and tranquillity, without expecting anything, showing loving kindness to this breath, however it is. It's good enough for me; this is good enough! Remember all those great teachings like Ajahn Gunhah's, 'just being in the beautiful breath'. It's *how* you're breathing in the breath and *how* you are breathing out the breath: that is Ajahn Gunhah's great teaching and that's the important part. You put your mindfulness right there; it's not what you're breathing in, but how you're breathing in now.

If you are watching your body and doing body meditation, it is how you are watching your body that matters. You may be going through the thirty-two parts of the body, but how you are relating to those thirty two parts? What are you doing it for? Why

are you doing it? What's between you and that exercise? Unless you investigate you will never get to the goal of this path. Remember: hindrances, hindrances, hindrances – they are the essence of the Buddha's teachings. We have to suppress those hindrances, and to eventually eradicate them fully. The hindrances weaken not just wisdom, they also weaken mindfulness. You can understand how they do that: any desire, craving, controlling or ill will takes the energy away from the mind and reduces the natural brilliance of the *citta*. The radiance of the *citta* is what you might call the sign of strong mindfulness. When you experience that strong mindfulness you understand the sort of mindfulness which is necessary for Enlightenment. This is why the Buddha said to empower that mindfulness, mainly through *samādhi*, and then you will see things as they truly are.

The Path to *Nibbāna*

When you see things as they truly are, you can see the playground, the place where these hindrances arise, where the defilements grow, and you understand what delusion is. Once you see the fuel source it's just so easy to stop it. Once mindfulness is strong and directed to the right place, you see how Māra works. 'Māra I know you!' You can see Māra in that space between you and what you are experiencing; this is where Māra lives. If you notice that, you can let go. By knowing it's Māra, then Māra just disappears. Once you can see that space between you and what you are experiencing, make that space beautiful, pure, peaceful, compassionate, free, liberating; don't allow any greed, hatred, or delusion there. And then the path is open for you. It is the path to *Nibbāna*.

Keep that up; maintain mindfulness in that place, and maintain the effort to keep that space pure of the hindrances. If you keep it pure from the first two hindrances the other three will also be kept in check, and you find that whatever you watch becomes so peaceful and that the mindfulness grows more alert, more powerful, and more happy. It doesn't matter what you are watching. Sometimes I'm sick, and even recently I've had a bad cold. Still I've been able to perform at my top level, for the last couple of weeks, doing all this work and travelling. The reason I can do that is that I put the attention in that place between me and what I am experiencing. I make that pure and then this cold can't bother me. By doing that you can keep on going:

you can meditate, you can teach, because the cold is not a problem anymore. It only matters how I react to that irritation of the body. If I keep putting peace there, putting freedom there, if I keep putting compassion there, if I keep putting non-controlling, non-aversion there – If I keep that place empty and pure – it means that the energies of my mind are really strong. When the energies of the mind are really strong there is brightness, there's happiness, and that happiness and brightness is the power of mindfulness. That mindfulness being so powerful can even take that cold that cough, and make it into a beautiful object. This is how we use mindfulness. And when that mindfulness is so strong that the five hindrances have gone we gain the *jhānas*, and now mindfulness is incredibly powerful. That's when we start to understand that this body, these feelings, this *citta*, these objects of the mind, are not me, not mine, not a self.

First of all we empower our mind and make mindfulness stronger by obliterating the five hindrances. The mindfulness is not just strong; it's a powerful, brilliant, still mindfulness. The five hindrances have gone, and you can take up any object and see so deeply into it. It's blissful, and it's powerful. Sometimes you wonder why it has to be so blissful and then you understand that bliss comes from the energy of the mind. Without that bliss, without that power of mindfulness, not only would it not be able to penetrate, but it would not be able to overcome the inherent fear of seeing something that is going to destroy your basic delusions.

The power of mindfulness is so important because of the fear of losing your 'self', of losing your ego. Your sense of identity is so strong that it is probably one of the last barriers to overcoming *saṃsāra*, one of the last barriers that you have to overcome to become an *Arahant*. The fear of complete disappearance is a barrier that very few people get over. One of the ways you can get over that barrier is with the power of mindfulness and its bliss, because bliss is an incredibly great energy. It empowers you: you are just so blissed out that nothing can make you afraid; you just go right over those barriers of fear. Who cares if I disappear; who cares if there's nothing left afterwards. The bliss is so strong you just go right through. This is mindfulness being so empowered, so courageous, so strong, that you go against all your illusions, preconceptions, and habitual views. Mindfulness is just so powerful that all those

things you want to believe cannot exist and all the things that you are too afraid to accept open up nevertheless. You just go right over them or right through them. That's how Enlightenment happens. That's what insight truly is.

All the really good insights, the ones that are worth something, are just like the biggest kick up the butt you have ever had; but it's a beautiful, blissful kick up the butt. What's happened? My god something's different! You are shocked and moved you into a new way of looking and thinking. This is the power that is necessary. So, with right mindfulness, the first job is actually to empower it and make sure you are placing what little mindfulness you have in the right spot. You can't afford to waste your mindfulness. Do not be concerned about what you are experiencing: the problem is not this monastery, the food, the body, or these words. Don't put your mindfulness there. Put your mindfulness on how you are reacting to your experiences. What are you doing with them in this very moment? Are you at peace with them? Even if you don't like what's happening, even if it's wrong, that's not the point; the point is just to be at peace with it. When someone calls you a pig or a donkey, when someone says you are the most stupid, lazy, arrogant, proud monk in this whole monastery, it doesn't matter. What matters is what is between you and those words. Put peace there, put compassion and emptiness there; then the hindrances will not arise. The world will no longer move you. There will always be peace no matter what happens, even if you are being tortured. Whatever you are experiencing put peace and tranquillity between you and that feeling. Make peace with it. It's just nature to have extreme *vedanā*. If you put peace and tranquillity there, the hindrances can't survive and even torture becomes beautiful. In other words it just disappears; it's not torture anymore.

When mindfulness is in the right place the mind becomes incredibly strong, brave, and courageous. The *jhānas* just happen: you can't stop them because you've seen the hindrances that stop *samādhi* happening. As mindfulness grows, the hindrances can't survive. You have this incredible anti-virus that is focusing on just the correct spot and when you hit that spot, the place between you and the experience, it's amazing what happens. The hindrances can't survive for very long. The *kilesas* run out of food, mindfulness gets strong. and bliss starts to come up. Stillness happens

and restlessness cannot survive. There is powerful mindfulness, bliss, and absolute stillness. When that builds up it is called *jhāna*.

A good description of *jhāna* is incredible bliss, stillness, and intense mindfulness. You are building up these things so that you are making them into a *jhāna*. Afterwards when you come out of that *jhāna* and a little bit of the stillness has gone, you see that the mind can move, but not very much. The mindfulness is now so strong, so penetrating, and so courageous that you see where those hindrances come from. You understand that they come from this delusion of 'me' and the 'doer', thinking that you're in control of all of this. You can focus on the Anattalakkhana Sutta: the five *khandhas* are not me, not mine, not a self. If they were I could make them like this, make them like that. I could tell my body, 'please, don't have a cough', 'please, don't get sick', 'please, don't sleep so much', 'please, be fit and don't get old'. You can't do that. You can't do that to your *vedanā* either: 'please, only have pleasant feelings, no coughs, no bad sounds from other people, and no criticism'. You can't do that. 'May I have a monastery that is nice and warm, not too cold, one where I don't have to work too much.' You can't do that! Let go for goodness sake! When you see that there is no one in here controlling any of it, that there is only emptiness – no me, no mine, not a self, no 'doer', no 'knower', just a process with no essential me – that's freedom. It's wonderful: at last there is no one in here, no one to get reborn to suffer, to give talks, to travel to Singapore, or to give ordinations. There is no one to listen to these people ringing up every evening with their problems, no one who has to get up in the morning and go through it all again. It's beautiful to know that there is no one left in there. So you can say that this is your last life. End it all, that's wonderful; just bring along with you as many people as you can.

Conclusion

The trick to make right mindfulness grow is to put it in the right spot. See more clearly and get empowered. When you are empowered through the *jhānas*, you can put your mindfulness onto the five *khandhas*, the six sense bases, the body and the mind, and you see through it so easily. Once you see through it, it's not just that the five hindrances are suppressed, they are smashed to smithereens, and they can't arise again. That way your mindfulness is always just right there in the space between the

seeing and the seen. There is no attachment left now; in its place it is just this process, this dance of *saṃsāra*, cause and effect, cause and effect. When you see the process of *kamma* you can undo it all: through the ending of delusion comes the ending of the *kamma* formations. You stop making hindrances between you and the objects. There is no *kamma* being made, you don't do anything – no desire, no aversion, no doing – you are just making natural peace in every moment between the observer and the observed. No *kamma* formation is what is meant by *saṅkhāra nirodha*, the cessation of *saṅkhāra*. That means there is nothing to give rise to a new life, a new consciousness; the *viññāṇa* in the next life won't arise, and neither will the *nāma rūpa*. The objects of consciousness in the next life are ended, done with. A good job done!

So this is mindfulness put in the space between you and what you are observing. You will never get upset at anything that happens to you in this monastery again. You will never have craving for anything in this monastery. You get food and you just eat it with no desire or aversion. When you give up desire and ill will, sloth and torpor won't have any fuel, restlessness and doubt will be gone, and you will get into deep meditation, *jhānas*, Enlightenment, the whole works.

19 PERFECT STILLNESS

29th June 2005

Today's talk is on the final factor of the Eightfold Path, which would be accurate to call the culmination of the Path, *sammā samādhi*. There is only one definition given by the Buddha of *sammā samādhi* and that is *jhāna*. The Perfect Teacher consistently and repeatedly explained the final factor of the Path as one or more of the four *jhānas*. Never, not even once, did the Buddha utter the words *khaṇika samādhi* (momentary concentration), *upacāra samādhi* (neighbourhood concentration) or *vipassanā jhānas*. These apocryphal terms were coined much later than the time of the Buddha. A disciple of the Buddha, one who faithfully follows his teachings, must of necessity repeat the Buddha's explanation that *sammā samādhi* means the four *jhānas*, only the four *jhānas*, and nothing but the four *jhānas*.

I maintain that the *jhānas* were rediscovered by Siddhattha Gotama for this age. They are crucial for the attainment of the Path. The only people who say that Enlightenment is possible without the *jhānas* are those who have never experienced a *jhāna*. If you have the experience of *jhānas* you know their power, importance, and value, which is why the eighth factor of the Eightfold Path is *sammā samādhi*. It's an important factor of the path.

However, because Buddhism has only recently come to Western countries, people are still struggling to understand the importance of the term *jhānas*. In past times they thought, 'Yeah, it sounds very good', but the names given to it, for example, 'absorptions', or 'right concentration', or 'trances' always missed the point. That is quite obvious when you achieve a state called an *uttarimanussadhamma*, a state beyond the normal human experience. It's the first real stage of transcendence. Scholars have a hard time understanding what that means, let alone understanding its importance to the Path. Giving it a good descriptive name may help people understand why they have misunderstood its meaning, let alone know the path to attain it as an experience.

The Way Out of *Saṃsāra*

These days I really shy away from calling *samādhi* 'right concentration'. I've been calling it 'right letting go' for a long time now and this evening I'm going to give it another name, 'perfect stillness' or 'right stillness'. The reason I say that is because it is the stillness of the mind that not only gives rise to *sammā samādhi*, the *jhānas*, but it's also a beautiful description showing the way to get into these stages. It's very important people experience these stages and discover how easy they are. If we give these stages the right name, a name that describes them at least with some of their important features, even if not perfectly, that will make it easier.

It becomes quite clear why some people, even some monks, do not attain those stages in their lifetimes, if they are trying to attain concentration. The very word concentration in the Western world means some 'doing', some force, or work. We are told at school to concentrate as if it is something that you do through an exercise of will. When we understand what *samādhi* is, what *jhāna* is, then we understand what a stupid idea that is. It goes in completely the opposite direction of what's needed to gain *samādhi*.

The experience of *samādhi* shows you the way out of *saṃsāra*. It shows you what Enlightenment is. It shows you the doorway to the 'deathless'. So it's very apt to call the *jhānas* the doorway to the deathless. Yes, we practise all the factors of the Eightfold Path, but it is essential that they culminate in the *jhānas*. The *jhānas* are the doorway, and through them you get the insights and wisdom that carry you all the way to cessation. But first of all you have to attain those stages of stillness, the *jhānas* themselves.

When we investigate these states of stillness it becomes quite clear that every time we do something we are disturbing the mind. We're disturbing the process and making it tremble; we're making the mind wobble. We are doing exactly the thing that stops the attainment. That is why when we talk about these stages – the culmination of which is the stillness of the mind – it becomes quite evident and clear that the obstructions to the path and the obstacles to the *jhānas* arise because we are always getting involved, interfering, controlling, and managing, even by just having destinations or goals.

Have You Come Here to Die?

At one retreat that I gave recently I said, "Try and meditate without having a destination". The people asked me what I meant by that. They said, "We can't do that; we'll fall asleep and the mind will just go all over the place." I said, "Give it a go and see what happens, but be consistent throughout the whole meditation. For the whole nine days have no destination".

If people have no destination they feel lost. Why do they feel lost? Because at last they have nothing to do and they can't get into the 'doing' business. They can't get a handle on something to aim for or to do, so it confounds the 'doer', it confounds the 'controller', and underneath all of that is the confounding of the sense of 'self'. This is why the meditation seems so hard.

In the first year of my life at Wat Pah Pong, Ajahn Chah used to ask, "Have you come to Wat Pah Pong to die?" Obviously he didn't mean physical death; he meant the death of the 'self'. It was one of those constant refrains that you hear in any monastery. You'll also notice that with me: I've got phases and fashions I go through, little teachings which are repeated over and over again for about three or four months, and then they change and I get into another fashion. I will go back to that teaching after a few years and repeat these old things – they are all still valid – but I put them into a different perspective.

"Have you come here to die?" That's what it feels like when you start meditating properly. There is something inside you that dies or comes close to death. That's the aspect of the 'self' called the 'doer', the 'maker', the active participant in life that always wants to manage, to work things out, so that you can describe it to yourself or tell your friends. Even the will to know, to understand, is part of this 'doer' business. That's why it gives rise to doubt.

Each one of the hindrances keeps the mind active and stops it from being still enough to see that the five hindrances are all about doing something. Obviously the first hindrance of sensory desire, craving, wanting something, is all about going to some sort of destination, someplace you want to get to. Aversion, the second hindrance is

about not wanting to be here in the first place, and that creates 'doing'. It's being averse to this moment, to the wandering mind – being averse to anything. 'I don't want to be here, I want to be somewhere else.' The third hindrance, sloth and torpor, is the result of doing too much. You've burnt out the mind. You're just too tired, and the mind has no energy because it's all been wasted in doing things. When people start 'doing', when they start struggling and striving to get out of sloth and torpor, it's just more doing and it stirs up the mind. I'm sure you think you've got to stir the mind up to become alert again. But you don't really stir up the mindfulness, instead you stir up more craving. Sure, that brightens up the mind and you don't have sloth and torpor, but you have restlessness instead.

In a previous talk I said it was a great insight for me to see that I was always oscillating between sloth and torpor and restlessness. I'd be slothful in the morning because Thailand is such a hot country for a Western monk. The food was terrible and there was no nutrition in it. No wonder we had low energy levels; it was a physical problem. At three o'clock in the early morning when we had to get up we hadn't had enough sleep and we didn't get enough nutrition. We were hot and sticky, not used to that environment at all. Physically, of course we were tired. So, what did I do? I struggled to get through that tiredness: 'Come on Brahm, get your act together! Be more mindful'. And because I was controlling and managing and forcing, yes, I would break through the sloth and torpor, but then I would be restless thinking about all sorts of things. I was oscillating between the two. When I got restless I'd calm down, stop the thoughts, and then I'd just go into dullness again. Some of you may recognize that oscillation between dullness and restlessness.

This oscillating between those two hindrances all comes from 'doing', from trying to control. That's the reason I've had incredible success on meditation retreats when I tell people, "If you feel sleepy go and rest". They say, "Oh, but I should fight my sloth and torpor. I can't go and rest. That's being lazy". I say, "Listen, go and rest", and because Malaysians and Singaporeans are quite faithful and have a lot of trust in me they do that, and they always get good meditations afterwards. They usually only rest in the first few days and afterwards they have all this energy.

At the last retreat I taught in Ipoh we had some incredible results. One lady, who was already sitting for four, five, or six hours at a time, sat for eight and a half hours on the last day. It was just so easy, she had so much stillness that she didn't want to move. That was because she had stopped 'doing things'. She had stopped making the mind move. Stillness was her goal, not, seeing *nimmittas* or holding on to the breath, not attaining *jhānas* or Enlightenment. She had a meditation that had no destination. The aim is not getting somewhere, it's being here. *Being here and being still.*

The last of the hindrances is doubt, always 'wanting to know'. That is just another 'doing'. Knowledge is almost like control: measuring is how we find out where we are in life. And that 'doing', measuring, and 'wanting to know', makes the mind move. Be quiet! You'll *know* later on. Don't interrupt the lecture; just wait and don't do anything. This is the path of *samādhi*.

Māra I Know You

When you don't do anything you're not feeding the hindrances. This is where mindfulness should be used in your meditation. It doesn't matter what you are experiencing – you may even be thinking of sex – the point is to make sure you don't do anything. Don't get upset. Don't encourage it. Don't get into aversion. In fact don't get into anything at all. If you put peace into this letting go by putting stillness between you and whatever you are experiencing, things start to slow down and stop. It's the hindrances that are the problem, not what they have created. It's the creating power of these hindrances that causes more suffering and a lack of stillness for you.

So, if you put your mind in the right spot and watch the play of the hindrances – the doing, craving, wanting, the trying to get rid of things, the talking to yourself the trying to understand things, and then getting sleepy and upset about it – you can see where the five hindrances live. You find their playground, their home. Once you see where they are playing around, you can knock them to bits very easily. You can kick their arse! When you do that to those five hindrances they hurt and they stop. You kick them by telling them, 'Shush, I'm not going to do anything. I'm just going to watch'. Do you remember how the Buddha and the great monks defeated Māra? They didn't get Māra and kick him. They just said, "Māra I know you"! They saw

where Māra was playing. They saw the area that is just between you and the object you're watching now, the area where the hindrances and the defilements live, and they said, "No". They were just still, without 'doing' anything.

Look at the metaphor of having a destination. Consider how long in your life you have been trying to get somewhere. We've all had these destinations, these goals. It's only a few weeks now until the Rains Retreat begins. How many of you are trying to get things out of the way so that you are ready for the Retreat, trying to get your projects finished and all of your letters written? How many of you have goals and are thinking, 'When I've got all of this done, then I can stop'. But what happens as soon as the Rains Retreat starts? You have another goal: 'Now I am going to get some *jhānas*', 'I've got to do this exercise', 'I've got to write this book', 'I'm going to read that book.' Always setting goals – when you've got goals you've got something to 'do'. Isn't it amazing?

If you put yourself into a hut and say, "I've got nothing to do, absolutely nothing. All those letters I am supposed to write, who cares? I'll put them in the bin and burn them all. I'm doing absolutely nothing, having no goals, no destinations. I'm not just saying this, I'm doing it. I'm not reading any books and I'm not going to write any letters so that I can '**do'** *samādhi*'. You're missing the point again!

This sense of self, this delusion, is so sneaky that most of the time we let go of one thing, only to do something else. We are always striving to go somewhere, always active, always doing something and because of that we are missing the path to *samādhi*.

Sometimes you sit in your hut and that's good enough. Whatever happens next who cares? You think, 'I'm just going to be aware of what's happening now and do absolutely nothing about it.' Even if your hut is a mess, sit there and do nothing about it. Even if your mind is a mess do nothing about it. Just do nothing. If you understand what I mean by this you're 'making' incredible peace. You're 'making' stillness, and after a while when you attain the *jhānas* you understand what the whole

process is about. You also understand why people don't get *jhānas*, why they don't even get into deep states of meditation, and why they don't even watch the breath.

You should know from the Anattalakkhana Sutta that if the five *khandhas* were 'me', if they belonged to me, if they were a self, I would be able to tell these five *khandhas*, 'Oh, may my body be so; oh, may my *vedanā* just be the *pītisukha* of deep meditation; oh, may my perception be of the light of *nimmittas*; oh, may my *saṅkhāras* be still; oh, may my consciousness of the five senses disappear and may I only have the consciousness of the mind; oh, may I get the *jhānas* and become Enlightened'. The Buddha said you can't do that, it's impossible. So can't we understand what the Buddha is saying and stop it?

That's actually what the Buddha said, "Stop it; stop it!" Monks, stop it. Lay people and visitors stop it. Stop doing things, stop going places, and trying to achieve things. If one really stops all this running around one sees the meaning of *saṃsāra*. *Saṃsāra* is the perpetual wandering, the perpetual moving, the perpetual journey. Always walking on and thinking that when you get to the next step or the next goal, you will be able to rest there and do nothing for evermore. But that journey is endless. You are always going somewhere, walking, travelling, and trying to get somewhere. That's not been just in this life, it's been going on for countless lifetimes, and you've never ever stopped. There is an old English phrase, 'In the journey of life, please remember to stop and smell the roses'. What I mean by that is in your lifetime please stop and smell the *jhānas*. That is what happens when you stop. You smell the four-petalled *jhānas*: the first, second, third and fourth *jhāna* because you have stopped trying.

Many meditators have told me that because they have taken this advice to stop – which goes against the grain – and have actually given up, let go, and abandoned everything, they get into the deep states of meditation. It works. It's true! This is how I meditate. I sit down and I don't do anything. All my mindfulness is directed to making sure I don't forget and start doing things. That's the nature of the delusory self. The thing we are trying to uncover and see is a fallacy. Whenever you think you exist, or assume you exist and perceive that 'self', that is the cause of doing things.

When the 'me' illusion is active we always interfere with things: that's what the 'self' does, that's a 'me' – its function is to interfere. That is why this sense of 'non-doing', of stillness, goes against the grain. It goes against the grain of what the 'self', what the illusion, really wants.

Give Up Hope

The 'self' is that which controls the whole purpose of being. To be is to do. You have got to do something otherwise you feel that you are dying. In the last retreat some people who experienced *samādhi* said they thought they were dying and they were afraid. So I said, "Well done, die some more". It's fun dying. You die to the body and the body disappears. Die to the five senses and you can't hear or see anything. It's as if you were a dead corpse. You die to the will, to everything. Imagine what we are saying here. When there is no will the body is not moving. It's not reacting any more. You poke it and it doesn't respond. If you were in a *jhāna* and someone opened your eye lids and shone a light into your eye it wouldn't respond. You're dying to the world. That's what Ajahn Chah meant when he asked, "Have you come here to die?" When the 'doer' dies so does a large part of consciousness, temporarily. That's what stillness means. That which moves the world has now temporarily gone. Lots of things have disappeared and you've died. If anyone remembers their past lives, that is what it is like to die. It is so similar to the dying process. After the pain and the trouble of the dying process the five senses disappear, just as the five senses disappear in deep meditation.

With the death experience you still have a little bit of will left; that's the problem. If you can let that go you get into the *jhāna* realms. That 'doing' is what keeps you active and stops you from being reborn into the *jhāna* realms or even going to *Nibbāna*. There are a lot of similarities. So once one understands what stillness is, what the defilements are, and what the hindrances are, it should become obvious how to get into *jhānas*.

Don't try and sit through pain. That's doing something again. That's just some sort of attainment, some sort of Brownie badge, or Scout badge that you can put on. "There, I've sat through pain!" We are not here to get attainments. We are here to let

go of everything. Letting go is what some people call attainments, but in truth, in reality, it's a non-attainment. You haven't done anything. You have stopped doing anything. You wonder why people praise you for these things. You haven't done anything. It's true! If you get into a *jhāna* you haven't done anything. That's what makes it so beautiful and wonderful. You are going in completely the opposite direction to what is supposed to be praised in the world, that is, getting attainments or getting medals.

You don't deserve any medals. You don't deserve any praise because you've attained these states due to 'selflessness'. So, if you want to attain those *jhānas*, do nothing. If you want to do 'nothing' give up your sense of 'self'. Give up your pride. Give up your ego. Die to your 'self' and completely abandon everything. Be someone who has no destination.

Christianity gets it wrong when it says that on the doors of Hell there is a big sign saying 'GIVE UP HOPE ALL WHO ENTER HERE'. In meditation 'GIVE UP HOPE', and you will have everything you ever wanted: joy, bliss, happiness, and so much stillness. It's in the stillness that you experience the power of *samādhi*. You may not have got into *jhānas* yet, but those who have experienced deep meditation states, notice the stillness in them. The more still you are the less the mind moves and the more happiness you have. The more peace you have, the more power the mind has. You can feel this is going in the correct direction.

Perhaps that was one of the reasons I was able to develop deep *samādhi*, because even the first time that I meditated I felt that something there was right. The peace was becoming still and things stopped moving; I felt that I was on the correct path. Fortunately I had good teachers who even in those early days encouraged me in that way to stillness. So, don't do anything. Just see how much you can not do. Catch any movement of the mind that might try to do something or get somewhere.

You are sitting down, and you are on a journey of life. You are not moving and you are not looking forward to any destination. You are not holding anything from the past. You are practising a 'no destination' meditation. 'This is absolutely good

enough, and so I don't want to move.' You build stillness upon stillness upon stillness, always seeing the cause of any vibration or trembling in the mind. Anything that stops the mind settling into this deep meditation is all coming from the illusion of 'self'. You want to get *jhānas* because you think that is going to make you a better monk. That's an ego trip again. 'You' want to get Enlightenment. Its ego again. 'I'm Enlightened!' 'I'm an *Ariyan*!' 'I've got the *jhāna* what have you got?' 'You've only got second *jhāna*, I got that years ago. I've attained third *jhāna*!' All that sort of stuff that sometimes comes up is ego. That is the reason we don't start shouting out our attainments in public, because it doesn't make sense. They have nothing to do with an ego or a 'self'. Ego is the complete opposite of these attainments. Who's attaining these things? No one is. It's just a disappearing from *saṃsāra*, a stillness, a vanishing. The whole Eightfold Path is a vanishing act. You are disappearing more and more and more.

How can you disappear by being still? Haven't you ever noticed that when things are still they disappear? When your body is still it soon vanishes from your consciousness. Consciousness is called *viññāṇa* in Pāli because it discriminates. The prefix *Vi* implies it's two, the same as the Latin word *bi*. It means 'two things': *an object has to move both backwards and forwards for consciousness to know it*. Consciousness needs something to compare with, and anything that is perfectly still eventually stops consciousness. That's why consciousness can only know movement and change. *Saṃsāra* is *anicca*, impermanent, but when *anicca* stops, *Nibbāna* or cessation is *nicca*, which is permanent. When things stop nothing moves; there is stability. So, the path into this meditation is to sit there and not do anything.

Many monks know that when they start to develop *jhānas* they tend to force the mind. First of all they try and sit for long periods of time. They strive and strive to watch their breath. But all monks know that at the very end they have to start letting go and stop 'doing'. In fact it's even better to stop earlier, from the very beginning, instead of wasting time. That's what experience has taught me. Years ago I'd meditate and really watch the breath, really force my mind onto the breath and then when I had the breath I would let go. I eventually realized that I was wasting too much time. Now I let go straight away when I first sit down, not doing anything, just making peace with

the moment. It doesn't matter what I am experiencing, what thought is in my mind, what sound is around me. As Ajahn Chah famously said, 'It's not the sound that disturbs you, you disturb the sound'. It's not the thoughts that disturb you, you disturb the thoughts. It's not the pain that disturbs you, you disturb the pain. It's not the five senses that disturb you, you disturb the five senses. It's not even the hindrances that disturb you – they're old *kamma*, once you see them – it's you who disturb the hindrances. You make the hindrances grow and give them power. If you say, "Five hindrances, I know you", you don't disturb them. Just say, "I know you. I see you. I'm not going to do anything. I'm not going to move because of you". Then the mind doesn't move and the mind starts to slow down and stop. It's a wonderful process just to sit there and watch.

You have all these thoughts because you have responsibilities and perhaps you have been talking too much, so just sit down and stop. First of all the past and the future disappears because you have stopped in time. That means there are no minutes, hours, days, or years. Is it morning or afternoon? Who cares! Stop the clock with 'present moment awareness'. All those thoughts in the mind, just leave them alone, and in a few minutes they stop. Understand where the thoughts come from: you are prodding the mind, poking it, making it move. And those thoughts are what a moving mind sounds like. It's as if you're wearing one of those plastic anoraks. When you move it sort of rustles. That's what you do with the mind: there is a sort of rustling in the mind. It's because you are moving it. If you shake a tree you hear all the leaves and twigs moving. All these thoughts are the result of shaking the mind. If you leave the tree alone it will be absolutely still. It doesn't make any noise at all. That's what happens with the mind. You just stop: don't do anything and the thoughts slow down completely. They finish and vanish. If you try to stop the thinking by 'doing' it just goes on and on forever.

The Stages of Stopping

So, those of you who have been trying to stop the mind thinking, please understand your fault. Stop trying to do anything. Stop 'doing'; just watch, make peace, let go, and practise contentment. That's good enough. Don't even think, 'I must stop', because that's more 'doing'. Just understand what stopping means and stop. When you stop, the thoughts go. Sometimes I don't even need the breath anymore. The

vehicle of the breath just stops. The five senses stop and I get straight to the *nimmittas*. Sometimes I go through the breath but the breath comes up anyway. I don't do anything; I don't make the breath happen. I don't look for the next stage of meditation, and I don't try and watch the breath or put it in one particular place or make it this way or that way. It comes up by itself. You watch but you are not doing anything.

In order to allow the five physical senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching to disappear in breath meditation, you take one of them, and then only a part of one of them, for example the sense of the physical touch of the breath, and you ignore all the others so that they can disappear. When the breath is the only part of the five senses that you have left, allow that to disappear too. The breath is like a halfway house between the five senses and no senses: we just have a little bit of one of the senses. It's only a method, a means of practise, and all other types of meditation are the same. It's just a way of turning off the five senses, a way of stopping them. The way you stop is by not looking, listening, feeling, or doing anything. After a while you stop scratching and you stop moving. The body disappears; it's finished. When it's gone the *nimmittas* come up. And what do some meditators do when *nimmittas* come? 'Ah, that's the *nimmitta*. Now I can really get it together. I can make them expand.' For goodness sake leave them alone! You've come so far; don't spoil it now. Stop completely. Don't say anything, just watch.

A *nimmitta* may seem like a big deal: it's so powerful; it's the biggest bliss in the world. So what! Big deal! It's not 'me', not 'mine', not a 'self'. It's nothing to do with me. It's just a phenomenon in life that comes and goes. So don't get attached to it; don't get involved with it. When you don't get attached and involved with it, you don't interfere with it. Non-interference means stopping, not doing anything. So, when these *nimmittas* come up, please don't do anything. Please remember to look between you and the *nimmitta*. See what's going on there; make sure you don't spoil the whole process that's come up. Because things have disappeared and you've stopped, your mind is still. If the *nimmitta* is moving around, it means that you are moving around. The *nimmitta* is a reflection of your mind. If your mind is still

moving up and down, the *nimmitta* is also moving. So be still, don't do anything. Don't spoil the stillness.

Doing nothing works almost like friction. It's stopping all the movement by becoming slower and slower, more and more still. It's like Ajahn Chah's famous leaf on a tree simile. When the wind stops the leaf keeps on moving but less and less and less. So, don't go blowing on that *nimmitta* and, using that simile, don't do anything. Leave it alone for goodness sake! *Don't even make an effort to leave it alone, that's more* '*doing*'.

Please understand what stillness is: it's a *complete* letting go. Understand that it's nothing to do with you: it's not a self and it's not under your control – it's non-self. Because you do nothing, the *nimmitta* stops moving. It stays there. You don't have to start thinking, 'ah, now I can go into *jhānas*'. Stop it! Stillness is like the simile of the magnifying glass and the sun. If the magnifying glass moves backwards and forwards the focus never becomes still enough to light a fire. If your *nimmitta* is still, it will grow by itself. If you do nothing, leaving things completely alone, if the mind doesn't interfere or go anywhere, if the mind is completely at peace – not looking for a destination and being as still as a statue – the *nimmitta* will come and it will grow by itself. It will get brighter and brighter and more and more powerful, because the energy is going into the mind. And then the *jhānas* happen, and wonderful states of happiness arise. The thing that has really been stilled is the 'doer', the sense of activity.

The full stilling of the 'doer' begins in first *jhāna*. But on one sense the first *jhāna* shouldn't be called a *jhāna*, because there is still a wobble there, *vitakka vicāra*, the movement of the mind onto the object and the holding onto the object. However, it is so close it deserves to be a *jhāna*.

The second *jhāna* is when it really all happens: full *samādhi*, the perfection of *samādhi*. When the 'doer' has completely gone there is no potential to move. That's a great way of describing it. Not just 'no doing', but no potential to do, no potential to move. Now you really are stuck in stillness. You've stopped! What does 'you've

stopped' mean? It means you can't move; you can't interfere any more. All your powers of interference and involvement are completely removed from you. You have been disempowered. Of course that very prospect is very scary because in that experience you've lost a lot of your sense of self. You are actually experiencing *anattā*. *Anattā* is the emptiness of the 'self', and you understand what that means, it means that 'will', *saṅkhāra*, is nothing to do with a being, it's nothing to do with me. *Avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra*: it's delusion that creates the *kamma* formations, the doing business. And that doing business in turn creates consciousness. Conscious activity keeps the five bodily senses and the sixth sense of the mind going. That is standard Dependent Origination. When delusion I being uprooted, the *kamma* formations are stopping and consciousness is disappearing. It's fading in front of your attention.

When things stop it's amazing how much disappears. The *jhānas* are like a machine stopping. Craving stops and the five hindrances all stop. These *jhānas* are stages of stopping – right stopping, right stillness. So instead of calling it letting go, because that's been a bit overused now, we can call it stopping, finishing, not moving anymore. If you do that you'll see the whole stupidity of the journey of *saṃsāra*, always going somewhere, trying to get somewhere, or achieve something, thinking, 'if I do this, I'll get that'. It's all craving and attachment business.

You can see that happening in people's lives. They are working so hard to pay off their mortgages, so that once they've payed off their mortgages, they can build a bigger house and have another mortgage. They call it investment. It's not investment, it's stupidity. It's all 'doing', and it just creates this world of *saṃsāra*, of constant wandering. Ajahn Chah used to say – I think it is also in the Saṃyutta Nikāya – that the dog with mange is always running, thinking, 'If I get into the forest then the mange will go'. It doesn't go and then it thinks, 'If I go into the city it will go'. It doesn't go. I thinks, 'If I go into the water it will go', but the mange is still there. You think, 'If I ordain as a novice then my itch will go'. It doesn't go. 'If I get into *jhānas* then it will go', but you never get into *jhānas* that way. The itch is what stops you. That itch is called craving and that craving is always wanting and desiring. It moves you, and that movement of the mind is what prevents the stopping of the mind.

So, look upon your life as a journey. When you sit down and meditate, stop going anywhere, have no destination, nothing to prove, no more Brownie badges, no more things you want to get, no wanting at all, complete letting go, making stillness your only goal. Say to your self, "I will be still. I am still!" You'll be afraid because it is a complete letting go of control. Giving up and abandoning this 'doer', this 'controller' inside, is like dying. You become as still as death and things do die. Allow that to happen and don't interfere, completely abandon everything. Allow stillness to grow and grow and grow.

Take away the wind of craving and the leaf gets more and more still. Keep on being still and that stillness grows so incredibly still, so motionless that the whole world seems to be trembling, seems to be like an anthill, or in chaos moving backwards and forwards like a chicken with it's head cut off. Inside, you are absolutely still. The sense of 'self' is dying. The sense of 'self' is disappearing. The 'doer' has stopped, and after awhile all the stages of meditation that I've often described just happen. You don't make it happen. You just sit and watch, and all the stages come up one after the other in their right sequence, until you stop completely. If that stopping continues for long enough you enter the *jhāna* realms.

Even from *jhāna* to *jhāna* things disappear. The difference between the first and second stage of *jhāna* is the stopping of the movement of the mind onto the bliss and the holding onto that bliss. That last little bit of 'doing' is almost like an echo of what was there before. You only notice that when you have been in the first *jhāna* many, many times and can compare it to the second *jhāna.* Once you are out of the *jhāna* it becomes obvious what those two different *jhānas* were. You can see everything stopping. Even the bliss and ecstasy stop as you move from the second *jhāna* through the third *jhāna*, to the fourth *jhāna.*

Things are stopping and just disappearing, flaking off you like the snake giving up its skin, only in this case within the skin there is nothing left, and you go to the immaterial attainments. These are just more states of stopping; the mind is stopping, 'knowing' is stopping. It's an incredible experience to see consciousness just unravel

and completely stop and to see the incredible powerful emptiness inside. Nothing is left. This is what *samādhi* is, and this is how you get into those incredible states of stillness called *samādhi*.

When you understand what *jhānas* are you understand why *khaṇika samādhi* is just complete, absolute nonsense. *Khaṇika* means momentary or temporary. You can't have momentary stillness. If it only lasts for a moment it is not still. That's why when people say they go into *jhāna* for ten minutes, I say, "*Come off it*, that's not possible!" You are so still in these states of deep meditation that you can't move for hours sometimes. You are stuck there like the lady on the retreat in Ipoh, eight and a half hours in *samādhi*. I knew she was doing a lot of meditation. I checked up on her after I had my meal, and she was sitting in the hall completely relaxed, not moving. She hadn't changed for hours, couldn't change for hours. She was just like a statue. This is what happens in *jhāna*: the mind and the body become so still. This is called *samādhi*. The more still you are the deeper that *samādhi* is. So, if that is what *samādhi* is, can you understand now that any type of 'doing' whatsoever – any interfering, poking, or prodding is just shaking up what you should be leaving alone? You know now what the problem is. Don't shake your mind, don't rock it. Leave it alone. Allow stillness to build up powerfully, and you too will experience those huge long sits, hour after hour after hour. So what's the point of all this? The point of all this is that from all that stillness you understand and see through the 'sense of self'; you understand *anattā*.

The Flame of *Jhānas*

The most powerful insight of Buddhism is to see that there is no one in here. Sure, I say there are two halves to the sense of self, the 'doer' and the 'knower', but really it is the 'doer' that feeds the 'knower'. Because we are doing things consciousness keeps on going. It is *saṅkhāra* that creates the consciousness. So when you actually stop that part of the mind, the active/reactive, craving part of the mind, the other one is fatally flawed as well: consciousness can't survive long. This is why consciousness starts to die in the *jhānas* and also why you go through those *jhānas* and immaterial attainments naturally. It's just consciousness stopping. It is practically imperceptible in 'neither perception nor non-perception', and then finally goes into

Nirodha. *Nirodha* means cessation, the stopping of things: the complete stopping of time, consciousness, and all that is perceived and felt. *Saññāvedayitanirodha*: all that is perceived and felt has completely ceased, there is nothing left. That is actually experienced. So when you come out of that state, there is no argument anymore. There is no misunderstanding about what the Buddha was talking about. Nor is there any doubt anymore about the path into *samādhi*, its importance, and its necessity.

It's essential to at least experience a first *jhāna* and to actually see things stopping; because if you can't stop that much, how on earth do you think you can understand what this 'doer' business is and what the 'self' is? If you haven't uncovered it yet, it means you haven't got close enough, and you haven't actually seen the process yet. You are still a 'doer'. Anyone who hasn't got into a *jhāna* is still a 'doer', just a controller, still on the journey. They haven't stopped, nor have they reached any destination. They are just into *saṃsāra*, wandering around – if not in the world then from monastery to monastery – wandering around in their minds from thought to thought, idea to idea, concept to concept, goal to goal, destination to destination.

There is never an end to destinations, never an end to goals, so just stop the whole lot in one go. Stop, give up, and abandon, and then you'll understand what *jhāna* is. You'll understand why it's called *sammā samādhi* – right, correct, perfect stopping. You'll understand why we practise renunciation, why we have all these precepts, why we let go of possessions, and why we stop doing things. You understand why we have huts in this monastery and why we try and make this monastery so that there are very few jobs and duties. If the whole thing falls apart you do nothing: be a person who completely stops. If you can be a 'stopper' in this meditation then you can get into *jhānas*. I far prefer that to having the most beautiful huts and beds and sewing rooms and all that sort of stuff. We need more *Ariyas* in this world, not more *kuṭis* (monks huts). We need more Stream Winners, Once Returners, Non Returners, and *Arahants*. We need more *jhāna* attainers, not more brooms.

Get the priorities right. We have all this time in the monastery, so just sit down and stop. Once you get the hang of it, it is the easiest thing in the world to do – sit down and stop. Don't try to get all those other things out of the way first of all, stop first.

There is no end of things to get out of the way. You will die before you get all your jobs and projects out of the way. Look at this monastery. This monastery has been going for twenty-one years and it's still not finished. It never will be. There will always be something to do here, so don't think, 'oh, once I get this monastery correct, once I learn this chant, once I understand the Vinaya, or once I've learned the Pātimokkha, then I'll meditate'. Don't waste time; just stop now! When you sit here, stop. Just sit here and watch and all these amazing things happen. That's the way to get into *jhānas* – not by trying to get there, not by doing things. Understand that 'doing' prevents stillness building up. By stopping, stillness arrives and grows like a fire, like a flame.

When stillness really takes off it's the flame of *jhānas*. The mind is so still it generates incredible states of mind and gives you all the necessary data you need. You understand you got there by stopping the 'doing' – no craving, no *saṅkhāras*. Things have disappeared and consciousness is peaceful. This is bliss. All this rushing around that I have been doing, all this wanting and craving, that was the wrong way. You get the message at last about what renunciation truly is and why people are monks and nuns. When you get that message, then you are sweet for the rest of this life.

You know what *jhānas* are. You know how to give up craving and how to stop the cycle of *saṃsāra* with right stillness. When you get that still, the whole universe stops. You are on the way out of *saṃsāra*. This is why we call it *sammā samādhi*, perfect stillness.

20 THE ENDING OF EVERYTHING

7th December 2005

ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha,
tesañ ca yo nirodho
evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo

Of those things that arise from a cause,
The *Tathāgata* has told the cause,
And also what their cessation is:
This is the doctrine of the Great Recluse

This verse was the teaching that Venerable Assajji gave to Sāriputta:

When we went to India recently we saw that verse in all the ancient Buddhist monasteries. We saw it written on old seals, pottery, and in many other places. It was a very popular early teaching, almost a definition of the Buddha's teachings. Perhaps it was even more essential than the Four Noble Truths or the Eightfold Path. It was a statement of the Dhamma of the Buddha, and as such it finds its beginnings in the words of one of the first five disciples of the Buddha

Before he became a disciple of the Buddha, Sāriputta saw a monk with such serene features that he wanted to ask who the monk's teacher was and what were his teachings. So he approached Venerable Assajji. That verse was the answer Ven. Assajji gave to Sāriputta. Those words were so powerful that straight away Ven. Sāriputta, with his great mind, was able to penetrate them and become a Stream Winner.

The subject matter of this evenings talk is the question, what does *ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha* really mean?

The Buddha taught the cause of all things, the way they originate, and also their ceasing. As a result of that Sāriputta attained the insight of all Stream Winners, *yāṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammanti*, whatever has the nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease. What does that actually mean? The reason I am talking about this now is because in some of the discussions I had on my tour of the United States there was much talk about such things. As many of you will know, the Christians in the United States have been forcing the issue of what they call 'intelligent design', wanting to explain the origin of this universe as 'God-caused'. Because they are running the debate in the U.S. and they have a huge influence there, they are deceiving many people. Because of that, as a Buddhist monk travelling in that country, I was often asked about the Buddha's response to this, and in particular people wanted to know the Buddhist view with regard to the origins of the world.

Christians are often very materialistically minded, only seeing nature as basically the four elements. The result of that is to not really understand or include the nature of the mind. So, often the debate is just on material things. But I'm going to extend it beyond that, into the mind, into the nature of the mind. As a physicist before I became a monk, the one thing that I do know is that the nature of form – what we call the four elements – is that it is empty of everything. As many of you would know, the mat that you sit on is not solid: it is made up of atoms and 99.9999% space – it's mostly empty. And if you could look inside that atom you would see that it is just this smear of potential places where electrons can be found. It is basically empty; there is just a tiny speck in the middle called a nucleus. When you look into that nucleus you find that it is full of holes as well. Basically there is nothing there except *fields of energy*. There is nothing really solid, just the emptiness of phenomena. Scientists would agree with that straight away.

The reason I bring this up is because when people talk about the creation of the material universe, they usually say, "How on earth can you create something out of nothing". It's a valid point, because in fact you can't create something out of nothing. That's why people think there has to be some sort of creator, a of 'God figure', to make that irrational jump from nothing into something. The point I am making is that because there is nothing in this material world to begin with, just these plays of energy, it's just an illusion. It is just a wrong way of thinking, a culturally induced

delusion, to think of things as being solid and to think that there is actually matter here. *The four elements are just ways of perceiving*.

As many scientists know, *suññatā*, the emptiness of any essence, of any solidity, or thing-ness in the matter which we see and feel, is an established fact of science. Because there is nothing actually here, the arising of this universe out of nothing becomes plausible. Sure, something cannot come out of nothing, but a zero sum (rise & fall) can come out of nothing and that is what this universe is. I use that as an example so that you can understand what that famous saying of Assajji means: 'whatever arises, that causal arising out of nothing, can also cease into nothing.

You realize there is nothing here to begin with. As you probe into it, you penetrate the illusion of a self, a soul, an entity, in the five *khandhas* of being, just as a physicist probes into matter and takes it apart, analyses it, and sees that there is nothing substantial there. The four elements are *anattā* (non-self). The sense of *attā* being an essence, a thing in itself, something persisting which is always there, *that is impossible*. It's basically a delusion to think that there is something in this universe which is solid and persistent, which will be there for ever and ever. Scientists have proved that again and again, and it's really irrational and untenable to believe otherwise.

Of course, when we start looking into our mind at the five *khandhas*, emptiness is what we are also expected to see, and it is something Sāriputta saw straight away. Origination from nothing is just an empty process, and because it is an empty causal process it is also subject to cessation, to disappearing, to vanishing – to going back to an original source, if you want to say that. Emptiness to begin with, emptiness in the end – anything else becomes completely irrational and untenable. Even the idea of an eternal 'consciousness' that doesn't change, is tantamount to being no consciousness at all. *Viññāṇa* or consciousness needs change, needs some contrast to give it life, as any psychologist would know. This is rational. You have to know from your own experience that whatever is stable disappears: you cannot see it, perceive it, or know it, because the nature of knowing is contrast or discrimination.

Now, this might just be words, but the practice of our meditation reveals the truth of what I've just said. To see things disappear is the very heart of the meditation process. When we say to 'calm' things, it means to calm things to the point of disappearance. The Buddha once said that *Nibbāna* is *sabbe saṅkhāra samathā*, 'the quietening of all the formations', that is, the calming all of the movements and all of the makings. Everything is calmed down to absolute stillness. Of course, people might have some theories about what stillness is, but the experience in the *jhānas*, when the mind starts to experience deep states of stillness, shows that stillness means that things disappear.

As many of you here know, I learnt my first Pāli from the Vinaya and I value that study. I was forced to do it because in the early years of our tradition very few monks knew the Vinaya and there were some silly things being done by us. We thought we were being strict according to the Vinaya, but in fact we didn't really understand what we were doing and we had no real guidance. The book available at that time, the 'Vinayamukha', was a brave attempt, but it was written by a prince of Thailand who in fact got many things wrong. And since he was royalty, no one was willing to question it, and so the mistakes lasted for over a century and they are still there. I learnt to read Pāli from the Vinaya. That's a wonderful place to start to learn Pāli, because in the Vinaya you see the common usage of those words in the down to earth practical actions of life, which is what the Vinaya is all about. It's not theories, it's what people actually do, and there you have the ground of language. All language starts with the world of seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, and tasting. It then gets adapted to the metaphysical world of thoughts and theories, ideas and philosophies, even religious philosophies.

When you ground your understanding of language in the physical world that is where you find the deeper meanings, and then you can apply those meanings to the metaphysical stuff. In the Vinaya I came across the seven *adhikaraṇa samatha dhammas* at the very end of the Pātimokkha rules, and I gained the understanding that to *samatha* things means to deal with them and settle them so that they are not business anymore. They are dealt with and they disappear from your agenda. They literally vanish; they are not there anymore. That's how I understood the word

samatha and also the word *upasama* because the two are used synonymously in that section of the Vinaya. That understanding of the meaning of those words in ordinary usage gave me the insight into what the path of meditation is. It is to calm all the business down, to settle it, so that it all disappears.

You can see that the idea of settling things into disappearance, into *Nirodha*, into cessation, is the whole theme of our monastic life. Sure, we build huts in order to settle the problem of accommodation, so the problem is finished, dissolved, and we don't have to do that anymore. We build our halls so that we don't have to do that anymore. We eat our one meal of the day so that for the rest of the day we don't have to do it anymore. It's all about calming, settling the business of our lives, so we can all disappear, so that we have no business to do. When we settle things down, it means the business disappears.

I spend a lot of time settling other peoples business. I settled some funeral business this afternoon. A person dies, we do the ceremony, and then we don't have to think about it any more. Unfortunately, some people create business. As a monk I try not to make more business, but often other people make that business for me. So settling business is my duty as the senior monk. But I look to those early years when I made very little business – the years when I could just sit down and meditate without having anything to think about or anything to worry about. I understood what progress I could make in my meditation by doing hardly anything at all: by living simply, not making business, doing projects, or writing letters. I even neglected my family; the first time I visited them was after seven years as a monk. I didn't write to my friends, except maybe once a year at Christmas. Simplifying my life meant I was *samatha*-ing, calming, lessening, and quelling all the business of my life. I understood that the path of being a monk was that of a renunciant, living outside of the world, not worrying about what other people think of you, not even your family. That's not what should run your life as a monk. What runs your life as a monk is something else: it is the ability to leave the world and not engage in it, not to make your life more complicated but to simplify it. This is one of the things that I stress to each one of you. If you live in this monastery your life is only as complicated as you make it. And your success in meditation will be inversely proportional to your complexity.

How many things are you doing and what do you spend your time on? Because we take on responsibility some of us have to deal with complexity. Many of you do not; you make it for yourselves. Be careful, *samatha* things. End things, don't start things.

I remember Ajahn Chah always said he liked the ending of things, never the starting of things. So see if you can end as much as possible. Don't end one project and start two; end one project and start none. Be a simple living person who does very little. The only project that you have to do is to come out in the morning, do your chores, eat, and then go back to your hut and literally end things. That is the path of being a monk. When you find that path and you practise this idea of *samatha*-ing things, quelling things, renouncing things, you find that things disappear. You are experiencing a vanishing in your life, a vanishing of concerns for the world.

Often people are too concerned with their families. That is an attachment, an obstacle. It's okay to look after your families to some extent, but in your early years, try to move away as much as possible, to cut them off; in other words you say 'no' for a while. I have done that for many years, and it's wonderful to be free of my family. Even when I visited them there was no attachment for my mother, or my brother, or anybody else. If they die tomorrow my faculties will not change. If they died right now I would never be sad. This is detachment. And it is wonderful to be able to see that in a person. When I went to visit them recently, I was at ease with these things. They have lived good lives but they are going to die one day. So, there is a quelling and calming of the business of your family duties. There is a quelling of the other things you want to achieve in life. What do you want to achieve but calm, peace, emptiness, stillness, and things disappearing; because if the objects of your mind don't disappear you won't disappear. You are what you do. You are your projects. That is what makes this idea of a 'self' and gives rise to more *saṃsāra*, more wanderings, again and again and again. If you want that you are just asking for *dukkha*, again and again and again. As the great *Arahant* said, 'it's only *dukkha* arising and *dukkha* passing away'; nothing more than that. Don't add more to what the great *Arahant* said, because that's all there is: *dukkha* arising and *dukkha* passing away, nothing more. See if you can allow *dukkha* to finish once and for all, so that there is nothing left: *aparisesa Nibbāna* – *Nibbāna* with nothing remaining. I am just

quoting the *suttas* here; they are the final reference of our tradition. We understand this because the more we follow the teaching of calming things down, of simplifying, the more things vanish and the more peace and happiness we experience.

There is a beautiful quote from the Jātaka Tales that, although it is found nowhere else in the suttas, fits in so well with what the Buddha said elsewhere, as well as fitting one's experience. The Buddha said that the more you abandon the five senses the more you experience *sukha*, happiness. If you want to have complete *sukha* (*ekantasukha*) you have to abandon the five senses completely. What the Buddha is saying here is not just about subduing the senses when you sit cross legged, it's actually about 'letting go' of the these things at all times in your life, disengaging from the world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. What other people say is only sound, that's all. No need to argue with it, no need to get involved in it, no need to think, 'that's a nice sound'. The correct Dhamma is that it's just sound and that's all. Please let it go; don't involve yourself with that world. Don't involve yourself with the world of tastes: beautiful coffee or tea, too hot or too sweet, nice food or not so nice food. It's just a lot of suffering.

What's the point of trying to find the nicest food? It just leads to a lot of suffering. You put it in your mouth and eat it, gobble it down. If you have a choice that's fine, but if you haven't any choice just eat what you've got. It's only a couple of seconds of taste and then it's all gone. What's the big thing about desiring food? The desire for food lasts for such a long time before you eat it but the actual experience is just a few minutes, and then it's all gone. It's all just delusion, make-believe, and anticipation – that's all desire for food really is. It is the same with the coffee afterwards – in fact you do not really taste the coffee anyway, you are all talking to each other. So what's the point: you could have rubbish coffee and you wouldn't know. You're not mindful of what you are drinking.

The point of all this is that we should try to abandon this sensory world. Even the jokes and all the talking is just sound, that's all. Someone tells a funny story or a lively story but it's just sound. The more you abandon the five-sense world and the body, the more happiness you get. What we are doing is calming the five-sense

world. When we are speaking we don't speak loudly, or harshly, or hurriedly. We speak softly, calmly, almost to the point that sound disappears. We move softly, calmly, and slowly, so that we almost disappear. The whole monastery goes calmly and slowly, so there is nothing left. We've built our huts and our walking paths and now they disappear. That's what they are there for. As it says in the reflections on using your huts: it's just for the enjoyment of solitude (*patisallānakamyatā*), solitude and calmness for the practising of *samatha*. Eventually, sitting in your hut, your hut just disappears from your consciousness. You are not there to look at your hut and make it look beautiful; you just have to keep it clean enough for it to disappear from your consciousness. You eat enough for the idea of food to disappear from you consciousness. You wear robes or a blanket if you are cold, so that the whole idea of clothing disappears from your consciousness. You do it for the sake of disappearance. That's what we mean by the path of calming, the path of emptiness and disappearing.

We do reflections on the body, 'the body contemplations'. Why? Why is that an important meditation? It has a purpose. The purpose is for your body to disappear, so that it's *samatha*-ed, so that it's not a problem any more. In fact it just disappears from your agenda. That's the purpose of doing body contemplation. If you can't sit down and get into *jhānas* – which are the sign that the body has disappeared with its five senses – there is still some holding in there. You are still attached to the body; you still can't let it go.

It's fascinating to see why you can't get into a *jhāna*. It's not through lack of effort; it's not through not putting in the hours. The hours are important but that's not the crucial thing. Sometimes people can meditate for their whole lifetime, eight hours ,or ten hours a day, and still not get into these states. Why? It's because there is still something they are unwilling to let go of, unwilling to renounce, and because they are unwilling to let go and renounce it, it never disappears. They just cannot *samatha* it; they can't calm it down into disappearance. So, this is why the more we understand the emptiness of these phenomena – what we call the material world – the more we see that there is so much that we add on to what we see, so much we add on to what we hear.

I was talking earlier this evening about the cultural conditioning that we have, because I have received a paper from some scientist about the nature of what used to be called *deva* lights. They have a scientific explanation: they are just phenomena with causes and effects, they are not *devas*, they're not heavenly beings. But it's amazing how people want to add on these heavenly beings. I was reading newspaper while waiting for the funeral this afternoon. I only half read the article, but some scientist had with great effect been debunking all these 'weeping Virgins' and 'blood coming out of statues' in Catholicism, by finding a good explanation for it. Nevertheless, even though there is a fascinating and good explanation, if people want to believe, they will add on to the experience what they want to see. This is the problem: our attachments to ideas and views stop us from seeing the truth.

There is a famous story from the early years of Wat Pah Pong, when Ajahn Chah was a young monk. On the day in the week when everyone goes to the monastery, this man was coming to the monastery in his car but the rain was pouring down and he got stuck in the mud. He was worried about how he was going to get to the monastery because it was raining so hard. He wasn't willing to get out of the car and get wet himself, but then he saw Ajahn Chah coming out of the forest. Ajahn Chah, this great monk with such humility, got behind the car and pushed it out of the mud. Ajahn Chah's robes were all wet and muddy, and his face was splattered with mud. He thought, 'Ah! That's what you call a great monk. It doesn't matter how much respect he's got in the neighbourhood, he is willing to give an ordinary layperson a push in the mud, even though he is going to get all wet and dirty. That's a real monk, not like some of these monks who sit up there and expect to be treated like kings or royalty'. This guy was so impressed. When he got to the hall just one or two minutes later, he saw the Pātimokkha being recited with Ajahn Chah sitting in the middle, dry with no mud on him. 'Wow!' he thought, 'psychic powers, and I've seen it'. Of course many of you know what the true story was. Ajahn Paitoon, a relation of Ajahn Chah who was a novice at the time, looked very similar to Ajahn Chah, and as a novice he wasn't in the Pātimokkha recitation. He had seen this man coming and being a kind monk he pushed the man out of the mud. But because of his physical resemblance to Ajahn Chah, in the dark and in the rain, it was enough for this guy to say, "No, that was Ajahn Chah". And no matter how many times Ajahn Paitoon has said, "That was

not Ajahn Chah, that was me", this guy never accepts it, and he will never admit that he was wrong. He wants a miracle so much and that's the miracle he has. That story went all round Ubon. I think it's still part of the history of the great teacher Ajahn Chah.

We make so much of things that aren't really there, simply because of belief. That's why in regard to views, no matter where we hear them, we always have to doubt them and challenge them. It doesn't matter which monk says these things, don't believe them. The only thing you can trust is either the *suttas* or your own experience – not other monks, not me, not any other Kruba Ajahns, nobody, just the *suttas* and your own experience. If you really want to challenge things you have to be courageous and iconoclastic. Iconoclastic means challenging sacred cows, no matter where they come from. This is how we deepen our experience. When we see what we are attached to and what those things are, they disappear, they *samatha*. They only arise from a cause. The causes are delusion, our sense of ego and self, and that's what we protect. When people are challenged they get defensive and angry. That's a sign that we've added a 'self', a 'me', to that idea. We've formed the 'I believe' connection that's the cause of so many arguments and of so much obstruction on the path to things disappearing and settling.

It's important to have some degree of right view in order to attain *jhānas*. Without right view it's difficult to get *jhānas* simply because there is something that one keeps holding onto, that one attaches to as 'me', as 'mine'. Because of that one is unwilling to abandon and let go to the point of entering *jhānas*. A lot of times the attachment comes from wrong view: there is an 'I' in there somewhere, a 'self', a 'me', holding on to something. I've explained before that attachment is like a hand. The hand has two ends to it, the end which grasps and the end which initiates the grasping. One of the greatest insights that helped me on the path was not to look at the end that grasps, but to look at the end that initiates the grasping. That is, not to look at what I was grasping but at who or what was doing that grasping. When you look at that, then you can actually unravel grasping. It's always the mind doing this, the 'me', the 'ego', the 'self'; it is the mind that wants to exist. The craving 'to be', *bhavataṇhā*, is holding on to things and making things exist. When you strike down that idea, that view, the

opposite is true. The less 'self' you have, the more things are allowed to disappear. The more you can renounce, the more things disappear.

The *jhānas* are the first stage of disappearance. It's tough to allow things to disappear. People just don't want to let go of their bodies, thoughts, or hearing. Why is it that sound disturbs you in meditation? As Ajahn Chah famously said, "Sound does not disturb anyone, you disturb the sound". That's a powerful teaching. What it means is that the 'self' wants to hear and that's why it literally goes out and looks for sounds. The mind wants to have a body to cling onto and that's why it looks for feelings in the body and won't allow this body to disappear. The mind gets attached even to the breathing and that's why it won't let the breath disappear and vanish. As soon as the breath vanishes you think, 'Ah! I'm not breathing', and you want to breathe again. Even when nothing is happening and you get into a sense of stillness, the mind freaks out. You think if nothing is happening it means that you are about to disappear. This is the fear, the movement, the trembling, that causes the five senses start again and this body to exist. It is the attachment of this mind to the body, the delusion that this is mine, and if I let these things go, 'Ah, what will happen?' It's fear of the *Dhamma* or fear of meditation.

Samatha gets you past these attachments through two causes: either through understanding or through the sheer pleasure of it. The understanding allows you to see that there is no one here, so you just let go naturally. The pleasure, the bliss of the deep meditations, can be so peaceful that – even though you don't agree with this, even though it doesn't make sense, even though it scares the shit out of you –the attachments don't matter, its just too joyful and too blissful, so you just go right through. This is actually where the mind can disengage from the body. When the mind disengages from the body, the body disappears. That's called *jhāna*. When I say it disappears, I mean not just the body but also the echoes of the body, the echoes of the five senses. Things like space and time are all connected to this body. The body moves and thus creates space/time. The mind moves because of craving craving, craving for something in this five-sense world. You're disturbed by sound because you are interested in sound; you are actually attached to hearing, that's all it is. You're attached to feeling, to the body; you're attached to the breath. You see

these things disappear, you've *samatha*-ed them. At last you don't have a body: you can't feel it, it's gone. You can't hear sound, and you can't even think. The mind has become so still, its ability to control the world through thought has disappeared and vanished. You've *samatha*-ed it. When you've *samatha*-ed it the body vanishes from your existence.

Samatha-ed means that it has *Nirodha*-ed temporarily – it's gone. People say, "But it's still there". That's not the point. If you are not observing it, it's gone. That's basic quantum theory if you want to be scientific about it. You need an observer to create reality. That's the experience you have in the deep meditations. The body simply is not there and you don't give a damn about it. If you can achieve that state you know that 'body contemplation' has done its work. Its purpose is to let go, to allow things to vanish, to see a world, *kāmaloka*, disappear. You've heard me say before that it's very important to experience things vanishing and disappearing.

To understand this, the best simile is the simile of the tadpole leaving the water as a frog. Only when the tadpole has left the water as a frog can it really know what water is. Before then it may have had theories about water, it may have heard about water from this monk or that monk or this Kruba Ajahn or that book or whatever, but it will not know what water is. When the tadpole becomes a frog and leaves the water, it knows from its own experience, not just from beliefs or theories. It now sees what it's like when there is no water left. It's a powerful insight which changes the whole way the frog looks at life. This is what happens when you gain the *jhānas*. You've *samatha*-ed the body and the five senses and they've disappeared. You know what *Nirodha* means now; you know what the body is. You won't understand the body by just contemplating it up and down if it hasn't yet disappeared; all you will know are the changes of the body, not the essence of a body. In the same way the tadpole might know the colours in the water and might know the cold or the heat in the water, but it won't know the essence of the water until it's disappeared.

Body contemplation reaches its fulfilment when the body disappears; that's its job. Its purpose is to get you into *jhānas*, nothing more than that. When the *jhānas* happen then you will have an opportunity of knowing what the body is and what the five

senses are. Before that it's just theory and beliefs; it's not substantial, and it will never get you anywhere. It will just make you argue more with other people. That's what is meant by being attached to views not experience. When you get into *jhānas* they will be the foundation that gives you the data for Enlightening insight. At least you've known that what arose from a cause has now ceased. The body has gone, you understand that. That is how the Buddha taught, and you gain incredible faith in the teachings of the Buddha, faith based on your own experience. When you see your mind disappear you understand what the teachings really mean. You understand that the whole purpose of going through the *jhānas* and the *arūpa* (immaterial) attainments is to see the whole world of the mind disappear.

In the medieval period of Christianity, long after the time of the Buddha, some of the Christian ascetics started to talk about union with God. What does that mean? If any of you experience a first *jhāna* you'll understand what that means. Many of us were brought up in a Christian tradition and can look at the experience of a first *jhāna* and understand why anyone from that Christian tradition would interpret and perceive that as union with God. That union is *ekaggatā*, the oneness of mind. The God perception is the incredible *pītisukha* of that state, the incredible power and bliss. I remember as a young man how I used to go to rock concerts. There was this guy called Eric Clapton playing for 'The Queen'. People would shout, "He's God. Eric Clapton is God. He's God. He's God". The reason they would say that is because they developed incredible bliss. You can really get high on that music. This is an example that 'God' is what gives you enormous happiness and power. It's very easy to see why Christians and even Hindus take those experiences as ultimate reality: the same consciousness, unchanging, and pure and blissful.

If you experience those states and you know them from your own experience, you'll also understand why those states that occur just before the *jhānas* were called *pabhassara citta* by the Buddha. The five hindrances have been overcome and the mind is incredibly radiant. That's the *nimmitta*, brilliant and bright. You may even apply that description to the first *jhāna*. You still have a bit of a wobble there, enough to see or get a handle on the mind state, on the object of your mind in that experience, and it is *pabhassara* (very bright, radiant) for sure, powerful and pure. The great thing

about these experiences is that when you come out of the meditation you are able to understand the framework of the incredible teachings of the *suttas*. You understand that the *pabhassara citta* – so pure, so still, so powerful – is also subject to change. It arises from a cause and is subject to an ending. People who don't understand that – like the Christians – will take those experiences to be the ultimate. This is where people get the mistaken idea of a persisting consciousness. They have the experience of those *jhānas*, but they do not have enough understanding of the Dhamma to really penetrate and understand that this too will pass, that this too is a causal thing, this too is just made up of elements which are of the nature to cease.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha tesañ ca yo nirodho, the first lines of Venerable Assajji's statement, 'All those *dhammas* that are of the nature to arise, or come into being, the Buddha taught their cause and he taught their ending, their cessation, their going out of existence'. In *jhānas* you have the experience of things ending, of the five-sense world and thoughts ending. You understand what the Dhamma is. One of the greatest experiences from calming down during the *jhānas* is the ending of 'will'. What a powerful experience that is: to see that this part of the mind that has always been there – the potential to will, to choose, to argue, to make your own decisions, to move the mind whichever way you want: that potential which creates the words that come out of your mouth, which creates the movement of the body, which is the driving force of your life, that whole movement that is so essential to your perception of a 'self' – completely disappears. Will goes when you see that happening. You can never again think that an *Arahant* after *Parinibbāna* can move to do anything. Doing is suffering; moving, speaking, going, coming, and all trembling is suffering. I don't mean trembling out of fear; I mean the trembling that moves you out of stillness, out of this wonderful nothingness – that is suffering, *dukkha*. When you see in this way that all the arising of comings and goings and speech or whatever is all suffering, it is because you've experienced the second *jhāna*. You'll know for sure what the end is: it's the end of will, the end of craving. The end of doing things means that the world stops. Not just the external world but also the internal world. The mind stops. The mind is that which moves, it is the house builder.

The mind creates; this is what it does. Sometimes we know things for what they are; sometimes we know things by their function. And that is what the mind does. In Pāli *citta* (mind) also means, variegation, colour, and beauty. It creates this world of 'beauty'. It's interesting to understand and get to the heart of the way words are used in Pāli. The original meaning of the word often reveals some deeper facets of what the word truly means. When the mind stops 'willing', when it stops moving, then the mind starts to disappear. The second *jhāna* is in one sense a very powerful turning point in the mind: because 'will' has stopped, nothing is moving. After a time the second *jhāna* settles down into the third *jhāna* and the third *jhāna* settles down into the fourth *jhāna*. Things change as the whole world starts to vanish, and space vanishes. The first *arūpa jhāna* is the perception of infinite space. In the second *arūpa jhāna* space vanishes. How do these things happen? It's just that the whole concept of space has no meaning anymore; the idea of a mind or body in some sort of space has no meaning anymore. Because the mind is still in the equanimity of the fourth *jhāna* and is completely one-pointed, that concept vanishes.

All that is left is consciousness. That consciousness has no bounds, no limits, and is infinite and nothing at the same moment, which is a sign that consciousness itself is on the edge of extinction. As consciousness extinguishes there is nothing left. The mind knows nothing, which is why the third *arūpa jhāna* is called the perception of nothingness. At this point the *citta* is vanishing. You experience this. It is no longer a theory that you argue about; you experience it from your own meditation. When you come out of that state afterwards you can see so clearly. The frog is now not just out of the pond onto the dry land, but it's jumping up into the air. Even the land is disappearing. With the consciousness disappearing you perceive nothing; because you perceive nothing, perception is dying. You can't watch nothing for too long before perception turns off. When you perceive the end of perception, this is what is meant by the state of 'neither perception nor non-perception'. You perceive the ending of perception that's why it's called non-perception. It just depends on what angle you look at it from. When you perceive the ending of perception, perception finally ends and the mind is gone, deceased, ended, poof, gone.

You understand that all these *dhammas* which arose from a cause now end in cessation. You understand those words of Ven. Assaji to Sāriputta and why Sāriputta understood it straight away. *Yaṃkiñci samudayadhammaṃ*, all these things that come from a cause, *sabataṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*, must one day cease. One day, sooner or later, it must happen. It's that acceptance and embracing of the possibility of cessation which shows that there is an ending and which makes *Nibbāna* possible. Like the shipwrecked sailor floating on the surface of the water, you can see dry land, the only place where you can be saved. Whenever there is movement, doing, speaking and existing, there is suffering. The Buddha said that even a small amount of shit on your finger stinks. In the same way just a small amount of existing is suffering: everything should be abandoned, should be let go of. When one understands this one understands the path to liberation, to freedom. Anyone who resists this sort of teaching and wants to keep something somewhere – a last piece of Dhamma, a last piece of being, whether you call it merging with God, original consciousness, original mind, or whatever, and I don't care what any other person says – that is delusion, wrong view.

When you see things ceasing, you see much deeper than that. You see the ending of things and the ending of things is the most beautiful experience. You can't get better or further than 'nothing'. Wherever there is something left, there is something more to do, something more to *samatha*, something more to bring to complete cessation and freedom. The reason people can't let go of the body is the same reason they can't let go of their minds: attachment, clinging. They Want to find some little corner of *saṃsāra* for existence where they can still become enlightened, enjoy it forever and come back to teach other people about it. That is wrong view. It's almost the same as the Mahāyāna concept about being a Bodhisattva and always being able to come back again to help other people. That's completely missing the point. The point is cessation, *Nirodha*, *Nibbāna*, the ending of things, the complete *samatha* of the whole universe, of existence. The Buddha found that out, and he said it was hard to see beings in this world, caught up in clinging and attachment, being able to see this deep teaching. It's true that sometimes we are not courageous enough. Sometimes we believe others too much, instead of suspending all of those views and just trusting in the *suttas*. Stop messing around!

Get into the *jhānas*, the real *jhānas*, not the fake ones. Even today there are many people who go around teaching and they know that the *jhānas* are important, but because they have not had that experience themselves, they are dumbing down the *jhāna* states of mind. States that are less than the full attainments are being called *jhānas*.

The argument about the importance of *jhānas* has been won at last. Even in the United States, talking with people like Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, I think that they now understand that you have to get into *jhānas* to get anywhere with your insight practice. So when I met them they were pumping me for information about the *jhānas*.

I have taught *jhānas* over all these years, keeping a consistent standard for what they are, never wavering in my description of them, explaining them again and again, and putting them in the context of the Dhamma. I have explained what they are for and why they are important. I have explained how they lead to the ending of all things, to *samatha*, bliss, and peace. *Anicca vata saṅkhāra*, impermanent are all these things; *uppāda vāya-dhammina*, even the *citta* will cease; *tesaṃ vūppasamo sukho*, there calming is happiness. *Vuppasama* is the same as *samatha*: the calming of all these things – the body, the mind, consciousness, perception, and will. When everything stops, vanishes, ceases, *samatha*, *Nirodha*, this is happiness, this is bliss. The reason they can cease is because there was nothing there to begin with. As the Buddha often said in the *suttas*, "Can the *Tathāgata* be regarded as any of the five *khandhas* or as the five *khandhas* altogether? Can you see a *Tathāgata* apart from the five *khandhas*?" The Buddha said, "No, you can't". The *Tathāgata* or Buddha is neither separate from the five *khandhas*; nor in the five *khandhas*. You can't see him anywhere. That's why you can't talk about a *Tathāgata* after *Parinibbāna*. *Anyone who starts to talk about anything existing or being after* Parinibbāna *has missed the point.*

When you develop the deep meditations, the *jhānas*, again and again and again, when you look upon them with your own wisdom, challenging every view, challenging whatever you have heard from any teacher, you will see just an incredible emptiness

of both body and mind and the whole universe. You see that because of that, it can finish, it can end. You see what a scientist sees: the complete emptiness of the material which makes up this cosmos, this universe of solar systems and planets and monasteries and whatever else. You can see it as all empty. All that is left is consciousness.

You see this physical world as empty and you know how it came out of emptiness. It arose because of a cause, which means that one day this whole universe will vanish in the same way. This mind comes from a cause and one day it too will vanish, but unlike the physical universe, it does not re-arise. Most minds take a long time, but as soon as you see the Dhamma and become an *Arahant*, you know why this mind will vanish after *Parinibbāna*. It says in the *Therīgāthā* , 'Your mind will surely vanish', *parābhavati*, (Thag, 1144) 'will disappear', *vidhamissatti*' (Thag, 184). I like to translate that as 'will be destroyed'. Why? Because the cause, the craving 'to be', has been destroyed. All those three cravings *kāmataṇhā*, *vibhavataṇhā*, and *bhavataṇhā*, have been destroyed. Craving for sensory pleasure is what drives worldlings; the craving 'to be' is what drives monks.

In the end all cravings, including the craving to destroy things, are nothing more than the craving 'to be'. The craving to destroy comes from thinking there is an existing thing that you now want to annihilate. Please understand the difference between annihilation and cessation. These are two different words chosen carefully by the Buddha. Annihilation means destroying something that is already there, *uccheda* is the Pāli word. *Cheda* means to destroy, to cut something to bits. You can't cut what wasn't there to begin with; you can't destroy 'nothing'. But the process, the empty process is different. The word for an 'empty process ceasing', for the whole universe to vanish, is *Nirodha*. This is what you experience little by little, little by little. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the experience that the commentaries call the ninth *jhāna*, as *saññā vedayitanirodha*, the 'cessation of all that is perceived and felt', That is, the cessation of the mind, is likened to '*Nibbāna* here and now' by the Buddha.

So this is what you can experience in this life, and it challenges all of your theories. You can see and understand the *yedhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha*,

whatever things come into existence the Buddha taught the causes of that, and *tesaṃ cayonirodho evaṃ mahāsamaṇo*, the great teacher also taught their cessation.

You understand why that teaching was enough for someone who was as sharp as Venerable Sāriputta to become a stream winner, and you understand why those words were inscribed on so many tablets in early Buddhism, so long ago. So, it is not something that has been changed by monks writing or meddling with the *suttas*, but one of the earliest pieces of Dhamma inscribed in stone and clay which we have today. They are probably the earliest written words of Dhamma that we have available – beautiful teachings about cessation, the ending of everything. If you want something, if you want to be you, why only have suffering? When cessation happens, everything ends.

THE GLOSSARY

Anāgāmī: Non Returner, one who has attained the third stage of Enlightenment

Anagārika: Literally: "Homeless One". In Western Theravāda Monasteries this is taken to mean someone who keeps the eight precepts and is in training to ordain as a novice monk.

Ānāpānasati: Mindfulness of breathing (breath meditation).

The first Twelve Steps of *ānāpānasati*

Step 1 – Experiencing a Long Breath;
Step 2 – Experiencing a Short Breath;
Step 3 – Experiencing the Whole of the Breath;
Step 4 – Calming the Breath;
Step 5 – Arousing Joy;
Step 6 – Arousing Happiness;
Step 7 – Experiencing the Breath as a Mind-Object;
Step 8 – Stabilizing the Joy and Happiness;
Step 9 – Experiencing the Mind;
Step 10 – Shining the *Nimmitta*;
Step 11 – Sustaining the *Nimmitta*;
Step 12 – Freeing the Mind.

Anumodanā: Thanksgiving, appreciation.

Arahant: A Fully Enlightened One.

Ariya: A Noble One, a person who has attained to one of the four stages of Enlightenment.

Āsava: Literally: "outflowings", that is, outflowings of the mind. Usually classified as three types:

1. *kāmāsava* (involving sensual desire).
2. *bhavāsava* (involving "being" or craving for existence).
3. *avijjāsava* (involving delusion).

Other common renderings for *āsava* are taints, effluents, or cankers.

Asubha: Not-beautiful (sometimes translated as repulsiveness, or loathsomeness). The perception of impurity, loathsomeness and foulness. The contemplation of the 32 parts of the body.

Attā: soul, ego.

Bhikkhu: A fully-ordained Buddhist monk.

Bhikkhunī: A fully-ordained Buddhist nun.

Bodhisattva The Buddha-to-be. In the Pāli discourses (*suttas*) the term refers to the time the Buddha-to-be descended from the *Tusita* Heaven until his Enlightenment. It was not used by the Buddha when he described previous lives.

Brahma Vihāras, The Four:

1. *Mettā* – Loving Kindness.
2. *Karuṇā* – Compassion.
3. *Muditā* – Sympathetic Joy.
4. *Upekkhā* – Equanimity.

Characteristics of Being, The Three:

1. *Anicca* – impermanence.

2. *Dukkha* – suffering.
3. *Anattā* – non-self.

Dāna: Generosity. Also used to describe the gifts of food and other requisites given to the monastic community.

Dependent Origination: Ignorance of the way things really are gives rise to *kamma* formations; *kamma* formations give rise to consciousness; consciousness gives rise to name and form; name and form give rise to the six sense bases; the sense bases give rise to sense contacts; sense contacts give rise to feelings; feeling gives rise to craving; craving gives rise to clinging; clinging gives rise to existence; existence gives rise to birth; birth gives rise to sickness, old age and death; i.e. suffering.

Deva: Literally: 'shining one', i.e. god, deity, or celestial being.

Dhamma: The teachings of the Buddha; the truth; the Norm.

dhamma: Things, states, factors, mind objects.

Dukkha: Suffering and unsatisfactoriness.

Efforts, The Four Right:
1. Not to let an unwholesome thought arise, which has not yet arisen.
2. Not to let an unwholesome thought continue, which has already arisen.
3. To make a wholesome thought arise, which has not yet arisen.
4. To make a wholesome thought continue, which has already arisen.

Elements, The Four:
  a. Earth – the element of extension or solidity.
  b. Water – the element of liquidity or cohesion.
  c. Fire – the element of kinetic energy, heat and cold.
  d. Wind – the element of motion or support.

Eightfold Path, The:
1. Right View or Understanding.
2. Right Thoughts or Intentions.
3. Right Speech.
4. Right Action.
5. Right Livelihood.
6. Right Effort.
7. Right Mindfulness.
8. Right Concentration, i.e. *jhāna*.

Fetters, The Ten:
1. Personality belief
2. Doubt
3. Belief in purification by the observance of rites and rituals
4. Sensual desire
5. Ill will
6. Craving for fine material existence
7. Craving for non-material existence
8. Conceit
9. Restlessness
10. Ignorance

Hindrances, The Five:
1. Sensual desire
2. Ill-will and anger
3. Lethargy and dullness
4. Restless and Remorse

5. Doubt

Hiri-ottappa: Moral shame and Fear of *kammic* consequences – known as the “twin guardians of the world”.

Iddhipāda, The Four:
1. *Chanda samādhi* – concentration of intention accompanied by effort of will.
2. *Viriya samādhi* – concentration of energy, effort.
3. *Citta samādhi* – concentration of consciousness.
4. *Vīmaṃsa samādhi* – concentration of investigation accompanied by effort of will.

Indriyas, The Five:
The control or rule one exercises over one’s mind.
1. *Saddhā*, faith
2. *Viriya*, energy
3. *Sati*, mindfulness
4. *Samādhi*, concentration
5. *Paññā*, wisdom

Jhānas: The deep meditation states of letting go.

Kamma: Action, or activity created by volition

Kāma: Pleasure; lust; enjoyment; an object of sensual enjoyment.

Khandhas - Aggregates: The 5 groups into which the Buddha has summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence (modified from “Buddhist Dictionary”). That is:
1. body, *rūpa*;
2. feeling, *vedanā*;
3. perception, *saññā*;
4. mental formations, *saṅkhāras*;
5. and consciousness, *viññāṇa*.

Kruba Ajahn: Meditation masters in the Thai ‘Forest Tradition’.

Māra: Literally, ‘the killer’; often called ‘the Evil One’, is a tempter figure who seeks to keep beings bound to the round of rebirth.

Mullah Nasrudin: Is a favourite character in stories throughout all of the Middle East. Children in Afghanistan hear Mullah Nasrudin stories just as Western children hear Mother Goose rhymes and folktales. Many of the stories teach a lesson while others are just funny.

Noble Truths, The Four
The truth of:
1. Suffering;
2. The cause of suffering;
3. The cessation of suffering;
4. The path leading to the cessation of suffering.

Nibbāna: Literally; “Extinction” (as in the going out of a flame). The supreme goal for Buddhists – it is the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion – thus, the end of all suffering.

Nimmitta: A sign, characteristic. In the context of Buddhist meditation, a mental sign.

Nirodha: Cessation, as in *dukkha-nirodha*, the cessation of suffering, the Third Noble Truth.

Pāli: Language of Indian origin, related to Sanskrit, in which the Lord Buddha’s original teachings are recorded (Pāli Canon), at first orally and later in writing.

Pātimokkha: A collection of precepts contained in the Vinaya.

Paṭinissagga: "Letting go", abandoning.

Pītisukha: Joy and happiness born of letting go. Factors of the first two *Jhānas*.

Precepts, The Five:
Undertaking the rule of training to refrain from:

1. Killing living creatures.
2. Taking what is not given.
3. Sexual misconduct.
4. Wrong speech.
5. Intoxicants and drugs which cloud the mind.

Puthujjana: Ordinary person, in the sense of not having yet penetrated the Four Noble Truths and attained one of the four stages of Enlightenment – as opposed to the *Ariyan*.

Reflections of a Monk, The Ten:

1. I have entered upon a classless condition.
2. My life is dependent on the generosity of others.
3. My conduct must be different from that of a householder.
4. Do I reproach myself in regard to virtue?
5. Do my wise fellow monks reproach me in regard to virtue?
6. I must be separated and parted from all that is dear and beloved to me.
7. I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions …
8. How do I spend my days and nights?
9. Do I delight in empty huts?
10. If I am questioned by my fellow monks at the time of my death shall I be dismayed?

Rūpaloka: Literally: "world of form." It is comprised of the realms which correspond to the four *jhānas*. One of the three worlds (*tiloka*).

Samatha: Calming. Often refers to meditational techniques whose end result is *jhāna*.

Samādhi: Sustained attention on one thing.

Saṃsāra: The round of rebirth (Literally: 'wandering on').

Saṅgha: The community of ordained disciples of the Lord Buddha. The third of the Three Refuges for all Buddhists.

Sakadāgāmī: A Once Returner, or second stage of Enlightenment.

Satipaṭṭhāna: Focuses of Mindfulness. There are four: body, feeling, mind, and mind objects.

Seven Factors of Enlightenment:

1. Mindfulness,
2. Investigation,
3. Energy,
4. Rapture,
5. Tranquillity,
6. Concentration,
7. Equanimity.

Sotāpanna: Stream Winner, the first stage of Enlightenment. One guaranteed to attain Full Enlightenment within seven lifetimes at most.

Sutta: Discourse of the Lord Buddha, or one of his chief disciples, as recorded in the Pāli Canon.

Tathāgata: One who has gone so; the Enlightened One.

Theragāthā: Hymns of the Elders.

Tudong: 'walkabout'; a '*tudong* bhikkhu' is a 'wandering monk'.

Vedanā: That quality of every conscious experience – whether through sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or mind – which is either pleasant, unpleasant, or somewhere in between. The English word "feeling" is not all that accurate as a translation.

Vicāra: One of the factors of first *jhāna*. The mind's sub-verbal holding onto the bliss.

Vinaya: The code of monastic discipline.

Vipallāsa: Perversion or distortion of perception, thought, and view – taking what is impermanent to be permanent; what is suffering to be happiness; what is empty of a self to be a self; and what is not beautiful (*asubha*) to be beautiful (cognitive distortion).

Vitakka: One of the factors of first *jhānas*. The sub-verbal movement of the mind onto bliss (*pītisukha*).